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ENGLISH STYLE

IN

PUBLIC DISCOURSE

WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO

THE USAGES OF THE PULPIT

BY

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PREFACE.

THE author of a treatise on the Latin language, published in the fifteenth century, commenced his work with this announcement: "This volume contains nothing which has ever been said by any one else." His production ought to have been a revelation from heaven. A treatise on a language a thousand years old can not be valuable, and yet strictly original. Very similar must be the criticism of a treatise on English style. It must be indebted to much which has preceded it in literary research. That which "has ever been said" must determine largely what remains to be said; and that which remains to be said must consist largely of variations upon that which has been said

In the present volume I have not scrupled to use any material which has seemed to me adapted to my purpose. I have appropriated principles of which no one knows the origin; I have employed illustrations, some of which belong to the common stock of rhetorical discussion; I have expressed opinions of books and authors, some of which I owe to experts whom the literary world honors as authorities. In exercising this liberty, I have availed myself of all the standard treatises on grammar, on the English language, on English literature, and on other national literatures, which have been within my reach. To name them even would be

in part commonplace, and in part pedantic. The most common, as well as the most rare resources of knowledge must be employed to construct a treatise on the subject here discussed, which shall be of any considerable use to the class of minds which I have addressed.

The fact should specially be borne in mind, that these Lectures do not profess to be an exhaustive discussion of English style as it exists historically in English literature. They have been delivered in a professional seminary, chiefly with professional aims. The clergy have been my auditors. Clerical necessities and clerical usages have suggested my plan and its details. I have endeavored to meet what I have found to be the actual state of culture, on the subject of my instructions, among theological students the large majority of whom have been graduates of American colleges. The chief features of that culture have been a limited knowledge of English literature, a more limited acquaintance with the philosophy of language, a still more partial familiarity with the English pulpit, and rather crude opinions, with some degree of indifference, on the whole subject of the style of the pulpit. I have spoken to educated men, but to men whose minds, on the subject in hand, have been drifting without knowing whither or why.

Discussions adjusted to the purest science of language, or to the highest range of literary culture, would have been just those which would *not* have benefited my hearers. Those who know the curriculum common to American colleges, in respect to English grammar, the English language, and the English literature, will understand the necessity of a great deal of *elementary* instruction in Lectures on English Style, addressed to students who have but recently finished their

collegiate studies. If the contents of this volume meet in any considerable degree the wants of this class of minds, in anticipation of the work of the pulpit, and serve to expedite their English culture, and diminish the inevitable waste of their early years of professional service by helping them to begin it with a scholarly ideal, my chief object will be gained.

Yet it is impossible to speak to such hearers on such themes without saying much which is equally pertinent to other minds possessed of scholarly tastes, and engaged in intellectual occupations. All the liberal professions are a kindred group. Literary avocations inevitably lap over and interpenetrate each other. It will be found, therefore, that this volume contains material of interest to other than the professional hearers to whom it has been addressed. As clergymen find their culture expanded and enriched by the study of law, and by intercourse with men of the legal profession, so lawyers and journalists, and other literary men, may find a similar improvement of their resources from a study of the literature of the pulpit, and from works designed for the professional training of preachers.

But works of this class often suffer from a superficial criticism. Of what use, it is often asked, can it be to attempt to systematize the theory of a practical business like that of public discourse? Who cares for such a system in the construction of a discourse? Who can think of it in the act of discoursing? A man can not walk on eggs without breaking them. So a man can not write or speak on a business of practical life, surrounded and hedged in by the niceties of rhetorical criticism, without thrusting them out of his way in the impatient freedom of speaking his mind. To this

style of objection it must be conceded, in reply, that, beyond all question, that criticism which is really valuable to young writers or speakers is a miscellaneous matter. It must consist of a vast amount of miscellaneous suggestion, touching here and probing there the actual faults in composition, of those to whom it is addressed. It is the proper work of the lecture-room and of colloquial intercourse. In its best estate it is suggested by a discourse in hand, prepared for the purpose by a pupil. Yet this volume of unwritten criticism does constitute a system. The teaching of an art creates a corresponding science. This is susceptible of systematic treatment. To avoid such treatment, in deference to the objection in question, would reduce it to a hodge-podge of literary remark, without beginning or end or middle. Something is needed to give to the work order and coherence. In the present volume I have sought that something in an analysis of the fundamental qualities of style. Under each of these are arranged the practical suggestions relevant to it, and valuable to the literary or professional reader. Such an attempt at systematic order is practically pertinent, even if it is no more than the string to a row of beads.

In this, as in former volumes, I have retained the style and forms of the lecture-room. In doing so, I have indulged the liberty of the lecture-room in pursuing discussion beyond the strict limits of the topic in hand, into related topics, by means of *excursus*. These, though not numerous, have led me, as I am well aware, into trains of thought which seem but remotely connected with the main subject; yet not so, as the subject, with its professional bearings, lay in the minds of my hearers.

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ENGLISH STYLE.

LECTURE I.

INTRODUCTION. — PURITY OF STYLE DEFINED; ITS STANDARDS.

WHAT is style? One critic answers, "Style relates to the words and sentences of composition." True: but so does grammar; so does syntax; so does language. Are these the synonyms of style? Another declares, "Style is that part of rhetoric which treats of the expression of thought by language." But argument does the same; grammar also does the same. Are these synonymous with style? A third defines, "Style is the body of thought;" or, as Wordsworth puts it, "Style is the incarnation of thought." But this is description, not definition. A fourth says, after Dean Swift, "Style is proper words in proper places." But any good composition is that: "Paradise Lost" is that. Have we no conception of style, abstract from its illustrations? A fifth responds, "Style is character." Buffon has it, "Style is the man himself." But body and soul are that: are they style? This, again, is descriptive, not definitive. Sometimes it is not true. The chief thing which does *not* appear in some specimens of style is the person of the writer. Anonymous

authorship might be well-nigh impossible if style always disclosed the writer's individuality. Of acknowledged authorship, are we not often obliged to confess, in reading a book, that we can not become *acquainted* with the man who wrote it? He remains at the end as much a stranger to the reader as the reader is to him.

The chief difficulty in framing a definition of style is to distinguish it from the term "language." Let the following be tested as an experiment: "Style is the general term by which we designate the qualities of thought as expressed in language." The pith of this formula is, that it builds style upon thought, not upon expression alone; yet not upon thought alone, but upon expression as well. This is probably all that De Quincey means when he calls style "the organ of thinking." He speaks more exactly when he says that style may be viewed as an organic thing and as a mechanic thing, — "organic, in so far as language is modified by thought; mechanic, in so far as words modify each other." Yet this distinction, in practical criticism disappears. The mechanism of style is nothing, except as it expresses the underlying organism. We simplify our conception of it, therefore, if we throw back the whole idea of it, where, in the last analysis, it belongs, — to thought as the substance of which expression is the subordinate and ductile form.

Two popular conceptions of style demand notice, however, between which it vibrates. One is that of sophistry, expression used to mislead: the other is that of ornament, expression used for display. Both of these assume that style is all outside. It is cunning in the use of words. It is the dress, the shell, the husk. A thought is a thought, "for a' that." So the good sense of men will reason on any such theory as this

One writer expresses with amusing artlessness this degrading conception by soberly defining style to be "the art of arrangement applied to words." Observe, it is an art, it is an art of arrangement only, it is an art applied from without, it is concerned with words only. Not a glimpse is visible here of thought, of organic growth, of words created and swayed by things. A comic song is a more respectable product than such a specimen of style. A "negro melody," in which rhythm supplants thought, would fill such a formula. A Cherokee war-song is vastly more worthy of scholarly study. If style be such, the study of it is contemptible.

Test the correctness of the principle here advanced by a criticism of a few specimens of striking composition. What can you conceive the style to be, as distinct from the thought, in the first stanza of Wordsworth's "Ode on Immortality?"

> "Our birth is but a sleep and a forgetting:
> The soul that riseth with us, our life's star,
> Hath had elsewhere its setting,
> And cometh from afar.
> Not in entire forgetfulness,
> And not in utter nakedness,
> But trailing clouds of glory, do we come,
> From God who is our home."

This we call an imaginative, a figurative, a poetic style. True: but divest it of its imaginative forms, and yet express all the weight it carries, if you can. It is impossible. The very measure is an element in the expression of the ideas. The thought is shorn of somewhat if you change the measure. The style grows to the thought, as the seashell to its occupant. Poetic rhythm often is to thought what the down is on the cheek of a peach: without it the peach is something

less. But admit that you can transform poetry to prose, then what is the thought as distinct from the prose style? Change the language; say something else than "trailing clouds of glory;" divest the style of figure, —and have you not clipped the thought? The figure *is* the thought, in part: every curve, every indentation of it, every vibration of its winged utterance, is necessary to the full and rounded expression of the idea.

Take an example, almost at random, from De Quincey. Speaking of the state of English hymnology at a certain period, he calls it "the howling wilderness of Psalmody." — "Ah!" says a pedestrian critic, "that is rhetoric." Very well: strip it of its "rhetoric," and yet express the same idea in its plenitude, if you can. It is impossible. You can not drop that figure, and yet express the same kind and the same volume of thought. If any one thinks he can, we are very safe in responding, "Try it." A piece of Russian iron is not the same thing when melted and compacted and molded into a slug.

Analyze a fragment from Ruskin, whose style is often thought personified. He wishes to express vividly the idea that feebleness in art is untruthfulness in effect. He writes, therefore, of the "struggling caricature of the meaner mind, which heaps its foreground with collossal columns, and heaves impossible mountains into the encumbered sky." Ruskin here unconsciously imitates his thought by his vocabulary and syntax. Strip it of that imitation of sense by sound and structure, and what have you left? Say something else than "heaves impossible mountains into the encumbered sky." Say this, at a venture, "A poor artist paints mountains which could never have existed, in a sky which can not conveniently hold them." Have you

parted with no thought in losing the imitative adroitness of Ruskin's style? In such examples thought so masters expression, and yokes it to use, that style itself becomes thought. You can not separate them by the change of so much as a syllable without loss.

The Lord's Prayer is, perhaps, the simplest form of speech in any language. We teach it to children. We use it in the precative mood, which, of all moods, is the least friendly to artifice. Here, then, if anywhere, mere forms of speech might be supposed to be interchangeable, and therefore the choice of forms of no moment. But change the style of the Lord's Prayer, and yet express all the thought, with all its suggested and related ideas, if you can. You can not do it. Even translation does affect this most perfect original of the precative style. It is not equal to itself in all languages.

The principle, then, holds good everywhere; and, the more perfect the style, the more absolute is the principle. Style *is* thought. Qualities of style are qualities of thought. Forms of style are thought in form. In every specimen of perfect style this principle tolerates no question of its authority. Not only is thought primary, and expression secondary: thought is absolute, it is imperial. Expression as an independent entity is words without sense. This principle is the corner-stone of all manly criticism in literature. Every possible excellence in style grows out of it: every possible defect grows out of the neglect or denial of it. A writer of superior mental force, starting with this principle alone, might, in time, work his way, by the sheer force of original thinking, to supreme perfection in literary expression. Yet, starting without it, a lifetime of criticism and experiment could not create a style of tolerable quality.

Another preliminary to our discussion is the *nomenclature* used in the criticism of style. This should be noticed for the sake of three things. One is the fact, that some of the terms used in criticism are ambiguous, and should, if possible, be avoided; thus, a "plain" style. What is it? It may be an unadorned style: it may also be a perspicuous style. Another fact is, that some of the terms used are substantial synonyms. "Energy," "strength," "force," "vigor," are all used to express one quality. A third fact is, that, of the multitude of terms employed, but few express fundamental qualities. We speak, for example, of "conciseness" of style. Dr. Whately very properly considers this not a fundamental quality, but a tributary to energy.

An important preliminary, therefore, is the *classification* of the fundamental qualities of style. Four distinct things lie at the basis of these qualities. These are thought, language, the speaker, and the hearer. Out of the relations of these four things the fundamental qualities of a good style grow.

Out of the relations of thought to language grow Purity and Precision. Purity comprises all those qualities which grow out of the laws of grammar. A good style is conformed to certain laws of language which are expressed in grammar. Precision includes all that is essential to the expression of no more, no less, and no other, than the meaning which the writer purposes to express.

One quality fundamental to a good style grows out of the relation of thought and language to the writer or speaker. We term it Individuality. It is that quality by which the speaker diffuses himself through his style; not merely that by which he impresses himself

upon his style, but that by which he lives and breathes within and throughout its every variation and sinuosity of expression. It is that which Buffon had in mind when he said, "Style is the man himself," and which others have meant by saying that "style is character."

Out of the relations of thought and language, and the speaker to the hearer, grow three qualities of a good style. They are perspicuity, energy, and elegance. Perspicuity expresses the clearness of the thought to the perceptions of the hearer. Energy expresses the force of the thought to the sensibilities of the hearer. Elegance expresses the beauty of the thought to the taste of the hearer. All these are relative to the culture of the hearer.

One quality remains. It results from a fit selection and a due proportioning of the qualities already named. It is Naturalness of style. It is that quality by which thought, as expressed in language, appeals to the sense of fitness in the hearer.

These seven qualities, and only these, I find to be fundamental in the criticism of style. All other qualities naturally fall into the rank of tributaries to these. These will therefore constitute the themes in the ensuing Lectures, but with one exception; viz., that of Individuality of style.

At the first view it may seem unreasonable to make this omission; but I make it deliberately, after vain attempts to discuss this quality in a manner fitted to the practical uses of a public speaker. As a subject of theoretic criticism only, it can be discussed, of course, *ad libitum;* but, as a subject of practical use, I am confident that prolonged study will convince any discerning critic that it is not a proper theme of critical research. The more sedulously a speaker studies and

strives to gain it, the less will he have of it. He must be a man of rare genius if he does not fall into servitude to some counterfeit of it.

When a man sits for his portrait, the surest way of securing upon the canvas another man, not him, is that he should set himself to work profoundly thinking of himself, — how he looks: are his eyes upon the right point of the compass? is his mouth closed with the proper degree of compression? are wrinkles visible in his forehead? is the head poised at the right angle? do the arms hang limp, or stiff? and so on. The more he thinks thus of himself, the less will he *be* himself on the canvas. He can defeat the genius of a prince of artists, solely by the conscious intentness of his own mind upon his body. Many of the most perfect likenesses are taken without the knowledge of the subjects of them. Portraits of artists painted by themselves are never their best work. The gallery of such portraits in Florence is justly criticised by Hawthorne as abounding with autobiographic peculiarities which in perfect likenesses would be invisible. To be himself in any thing, a man must not think of being it. An English officer said of the Duke of Wellington, that he did not write as well after the battle of Waterloo as before; because he knew that whatever he wrote would be printed, and he wrote thinking how it would look in print.

The principle illustrated in these examples governs the art of acquiring individuality of style. A speaker can not impress his own individuality upon his discourse consciously. He can not, therefore, study this quality successfully for any practical uses. As a theme of rhetorical science, with frequent incursions into psychological science, it can be studied; but, as a theme

of practical criticism for uses in public speech, the less a man knows of it the better. It is a quality which must come unbidden, as happiness does to the unconscious recipient: it can not be produced by force of will, nor acquired by studious discipline. It does not fall, therefore, within the scope of these Lectures any further than to be recognized in the critical analysis of style.

PURITY OF ENGLISH STYLE.

Of those fundamental qualities of style which admit of critical study for the practical uses of the pulpit, the first in order is that of PURITY.

I. This may be more specifically defined by several memoranda, of which the first is, that it relates to three things; viz., the form of words, the construction of words in continuous discourse, and the meaning of words and phrases. The second, therefore, is, that it requires three things; viz., that the words used should belong to the English language, that the construction be accordant with English idiom, and that words and phrases be employed in the senses recognized by good English authority. The third is, that therefore the violations of English purity are offenses against the three departments of scientific grammar. In the form of a word, a violation of purity is an offense against the laws of English etymology and their modifications by usage. In the construction of sentences, a violation of purity is an offense against English syntax. In the meaning of words or phrases, a violation of purity is an offense against the authority of lexicography. The fourth is, that the names given to the chief violations of purity are three. In the forms of words, a violation of purity is a barbarism: in the constructions, a vio-

lation of purity is a solecism; in the meanings of words and phrases, a violation of purity is an impropriety.

II. A further topic fundamental to the subject is the inquiry, What is the standard of English purity of style? The history of this question in the rhetorical literature of the language discloses but two opinions which deserve debate. You will readily recall them from your collegiate text-books. They may be represented by the formula, "Usage *versus* Laws of Language.' One opinion gives the ascendency to usage, the other to the laws of the language, as the ultimate authority. One class of writers adopt an extreme utilitarianism, saying, "If a man makes himself understood by those who *use* the language, why should he care for a pure style beyond that?" This is the one extreme. At the opposite extreme are the "Purists." They hold in theory, that, be the usage of a people what it may, the laws of a language must be authoritative to scholars. Purists in the use of language have existed in every country which has had a literature. In the first half of the sixteenth century, Italian scholars would employ none but the purest Augustan Latin. Erasmus contended, that the true rule for a scholarly author was to write as Cicero would have written if he had lived to modern times. He rejected as unscholarly all the languages of modern Europe. It was one of his chief objections to the Reformation, that it employed the language of the German people. The principles of Luther he approved, but he could not admit that Christianity could ever outgrow the Latin tongue. His life was a sacrifice of the Christian religion to the conservatism of literature. All the modern languages of Europe had a similar conflict with the ancient classic Latin.

The action was, "The Aristocracy of Learning *versus* the Democracy of Usage." Usage triumphed, and forced new languages into being. The conclusion was foregone from the beginning.

The history of this conflict of opinion seems to indicate the true theory on the subject in two principles which practically qualify and limit each other. One is, that the laws of a language are the proximate standard of purity. A language is the production of the national mind. In it the national mind has expressed its unconscious will. Like every other national growth, it is a thing of law. If exposed to the inroad of alien or mongrel words, or barbarous idioms, the interests of culture require, that, if possible, it should be protected by appeal to its inherent laws. A violation of those laws is to scholarly taste an evil. It is an excrescence on the national tongue, to be excluded if possible; to be checked in its growth if it can not be excluded, to be often only tolerated if it can not be checked, — till the national usage shall possibly right itself, and go back to the purer forms of speech.

But another principle qualifies and controls this: it is, that usage must be the ultimate standard of purity Recognizing the conservative authority of scholarly taste as expressed in the laws of the language, we must submit to usage if that insists on change. This principle rests on several reasons. One is that of simple necessity. A language is a nation's property. The many make it, not the few. If the many choose to change it, enlarge it, bring importations into it, even load it with absolutely new creations, how shall the few who object on grounds of scholarly taste help themselves? The nation retains the most absolute of all rights, — the right of creatorship. It is sufficient to say,

that scholarly taste must yield because it must. Usage may be tyrannical. It may create words by sheer whim. It may indulge a taste for vulgarisms. This makes no difference. If scholarly authority can not make itself felt as a conservative influence, it has no power to act as a conservative force.

An amateur in philological studies once found, as he believed, a Norman origin for the word "quiz." But Smart, the author of an English dictionary, gives to the word a more simple and probable origin. He says, that the manager of a theater in Dublin once passed an evening with certain amateurs in literature; and he staked a sum of money on the proposal that he would create a word which should belong to no language on the globe, and should be absolutely void of sense, yet it should become the subject of the common talk of the town in twenty-four hours. The wager was accepted. He then sent his servants through the most densely peopled streets of the city, with directions to chalk in large capitals the letters Q U I Z on each alternate door and shop-window. The next day was Sunday. Stores were closed, and the throng in the streets had leisure to read the enigmatical letters. Every one who saw it repeated it to his neighbor; and his neighbor responded, "What does 'quiz' mean?" It had no meaning. No language owned it. Scholarly taste scouted it. Yet everybody laughed at it, and that gave it a meaning. From that day to this, scholarship has been compelled to recognize the word, and to use it as good sound English. In such a case usage declares its will, and says to scholarship, "What will you do about it?"

Further: the principle before us rests on its usefulness. Languages need improvement. The most finished

languages admit of improvement. The Greek, the most perfect medium of human speech the world has known, never saw the time when it could not have been improved. Sixty years ago the Prussian Government published a dictionary, to be used in the public service, restricted to words of strictly national origin and then in use. It was an attempt, by authority of law, to prevent the introduction of new and foreign words. It was, by the nature of the case, doomed to failure. A national mind grows; it accumulates a history; new ideas are born; new institutions are created; new wants arise. Language, therefore, must grow, to express these novel facts. We must have new words, new idioms, new constructions, new combinations, and new senses of old words.

Specially is this true of every new epoch in a nation's history. Such events as the rise of Greek art, the growth of the Roman Empire, the irruption of the northern tribes into Italy, the rise of the Papacy, the Reformation, the French Revolution, the downfall of American slavery, either create, or are created by, new ideas, which exceed the capacities of language as before organized and fixed. Moreover, one national mind originates ideas not original to another. One language also gives birth to words more felicitously expressive than their synonyms in another of ideas common to both. One, therefore, must borrow from another: there is no shame in that. Our English word "humbug," for instance, is an English original. I find it stated on good authority, that it can not be reproduced in one word in any other living tongue. Yet it is too valuable a word to be excluded from any language.

In the French language a dictionary is extant containing only the words born into the language since

the Revolution of 1789. Among the old books in the British Museum is found a dictionary, of which this is the title, "A Dictionary of all words born since 1640, in speeches, prayers, and sermons: as well those that signify something as nothing." These dictionaries were published after periods of popular ferment. The passions of nations had been raging. They had forced national growth, and therefore the expansion of languages. Such epochs are sure to create words which "signify something."

It would be more than a work of literary curiosity to collate the new words to which the rise and fall of American slavery have given birth. Even so unexceptional an event as the election of an American President may create a word which shall live a thousand years. The hybrid word "bulldoze" may prove to be an example. Who knows its origin? Who can define it etymologically? Yet the American bar, and the Supreme Court, and the Congress of the United States, have been using it for years in grave discussions involving the purity of the ballot and the existence of the Republic. It is doubtless a word of vulgar origin, supported by not a shadow of scholarly authority. Yet the critical facts of our recent national history enter into its structure. We may hunt the world over, and not find its synonym. Yet it may become a necessity to national thought, and may live when a thousand importations from the classic languages have passed away. It would not be unlike the philological history of some other words if lexicographers, a century hence, should trace back the history of that word to some learned and complicated involution with an Anglo-Saxon or Arabic root.

The usefulness of a language, then, necessitates a

scholarly obedience to usage as the authority of last resort. We not only must obey because we must, we must obey in order that our language may conform to the national wants, and be an honest expression of the national mind.

III. The foregoing views suggest the inquiry, To what restrictions is usage practically subjected by the conservative influence of the laws of a language? Scholarly taste has recognized the following principles. I review them rapidly, because the standard rhetorical works have made them familiar.

In the first place, that which we recognize as our ultimate standard of purity should be the *present* usage; not the usage of a past age, not the possible usage of a future age. The laws of a language protect it, not as it was, not as it may or will or ought to be, but as it is. Conservative presumption always favors the thing that is. The great majority of things in human life prove their right to be by being.

Again: that which we accept as authority should be the *national* usage. The laws of a language protect it from the errors of foreign usage; that is, the usage of those to whom it is not vernacular. M. Guizot, for instance, wrote and spoke the English language with almost the accuracy of an English scholar; but he was not an authority on a question of English purity. The authoritative use is the vernacular use. The laws of a language also prescribe the national usage as distinct from any sectional use. The English-speaking world abounds with provincialisms. Scotticisms, Americanisms, Irish idioms, Australian *patois*, the Chinook dialect of Oregon, are no part of the English language, because they have not the stamp of universal use. The laws of a language further support the

national usage as distinct from clannish use. Why is not the lingo of the forecastle pure English? Why not the jargon of the thieves of London? Why not the cant of religious enthusiasts? Why not the slang of American colleges? Because these are clannish. No national authority supports them.

The third restriction which the laws of a language lay upon the usage to which we appeal for our authority is, that it shall be *reputable* usage. This principle grows out of the obvious and necessary difference between the colloquial use of the language by all classes, and the use of it in continuous discourse by public speakers and writers. Every man who uses the language much in both these modes adopts inevitably different styles. Words and constructions which conversation tolerates, perhaps requires, are often unfit for discourse, either written or oral. Not only the book, but the speech, demands elements of diction for which conversation provides no range.

A critic in "Blackwood's Magazine" says, that "at the present day, in the English portions of the world, — European, Asiatic, Australian, African, and American, — all educated people use three different kinds of English: old Saxon English when they go to church, or read good poetry; vernacular or colloquial English, not altogether free from slang and vulgarity, when they talk to one another in the ordinary intercourse of life; and literary English when they make speeches or sermons, and write or read articles in reviews or books. This threefold division of the language has always existed; though the great bulk of the people, up to recent times, may have only been familiar with the first, with its limited range of nouns, verbs, and adjectives." A scholar of thoroughly good taste must

demur to this analysis of existing usage in some respects; yet a foundation for some similar distinction exists in the necessities of the case. It is obvious, that one who writes or speaks much in public must have a standard of pure English other than the usage of numerical majorities. Majorities use the language only colloquially. We are driven to look above them for a standard of classic purity. We find it in the usage of reputable authors.

What do we mean by reputable authors? We mean those authors, who, by the common consent, have been successful in their use of their language. Reputation proves success; not notoriety, but good repute. Literary fame entitles an author to rank as a standard in literary style, on the same principle on which fame at the bar and on the bench renders a lawyer an authority to his profession. Pope, Dryden, Macaulay, Everett, Irving, are standards of pure English, as Blackstone, Brougham, Marshall, Story, are standards in jurisprudence. By unwritten common law, such names have the voice of the nations behind them, and speaking in them. Scholarly taste obliges writers and public speakers to acknowledge this standard. It is unscholarly not to do so. Even the common, uneducated mind has a dim sense of this claim of pure English on an educated speaker. The common people like to be addressed in sound old English which has the centuries behind it. They desire it to be plain, direct, strong, racy; but they never as a body desire it to be low. Marines do not like to be preached to in the dialect of the forecastle. When one preacher of distinction in our metropolis endeavored to preach thus on a man-of-war in Boston harbor, his hearers said, when his back was turned, that "there were two things which

he did not understand, — religion and navigation." A rabble in the street will often hoot if they are addressed in bad grammar.

Patrick Henry thought to win the favor of the backwoodsmen of Virginia by imitating their colloquial dialect, of which his biographer gives the following specimen from one of his speeches: "All the larnin upon the yairth are not to be compared with naiteral pairts." But his hearers, backwoodsmen though they were, knew better than that; and they knew that a statesman of the Old Dominion ought to speak good English. They were his severest critics. The common people know good English when they hear it; they understand it: men crave it who never use it. In their unconscious criticism of a speaker, his right to their hearing depends on his ability to say something worth their hearing; and one of the first evidences they look for of that ability is that he speaks better English than they do.

LECTURE II.

PURITY OF STYLE CONTINUED; ITS VIOLATIONS.

THE consideration of the standards of English purity in the last Lecture leads us to observe, as the fourth general topic of discussion, the most important violations of a pure style. What are they? We have observed their well-known names in defining this quality; viz., the barbarism, the solecism, and the impropriety.

1. We note them now more specifically by observing that purity is violated by the use of the *obsolete* in language; that is, by obsolete words, or constructions, or significations. Present usage being the standard, it is not sufficient, to authorize the use of a word, a construction, or a signification, that it has once been pure English. Old words are often like old plows. They must give way if the national civilization has outlived them. Why may we not now employ the words "peradventure," "forsooth," "yclept," "whilom"? In Latimer's day it was no violation of good taste to use the word "alonely." These words are all barbarisms now, because they are obsolete. Dr. Barrow says, "It is our duty to testify an affectionate *resentment* to God.' "Resentment" once signified the act of acknowledging a favor. Jeremy Taylor says, "Humility is a duty in great ones no less than in *idiots*." "Idiot," in his day, meant a private man only, retaining the etymological sense of the original Greek. A writer of the same

period speaks of Lord Bacon as a man of "very wise *prejudices*." "Prejudice" then meant only a prejudgment. "Humility" and "pusillanimity" were once synonyms. The history of these words illustrates the conflict of Christianity with Paganism to make the lowly virtues respectable. The word "painful" has a similar history. It once signified, not "producing pain," but "taking pains." Richard Baxter was called by his contemporaries "a most painful preacher." Wren, once Bishop of Ely, was charged by the Puritans with "having banished fifty godly, learned, and painful preachers" from the kingdom.

A singular instance occurs, in King James's translation of the Scriptures, of an idiomatic phrase which was once good English, but which now needs the commentator's paraphrase. St. Paul says, "I know nothing by myself; yet am I not hereby justified." The first of these clauses was once a good English idiom for the expression, "I am not conscious of any fault." To-day I do not know that it exists even as a provincialism. Some of the most vital words in theological science have undergone changes of meaning. The interpretation of ancient creeds often hinges on questions of literary purity. The most conclusive of historic arguments against the recognition of seven sacraments is found in the history of the word "sacrament." It is impossible, in the nature of the case, to construct a creed for all time. Language is a fluid, not a solid, in its signification. Five hundred years are long enough to petrify any creed into a mere historic monument. The Theological Seminary at Andover is yet by a score of years within its first century, but already its elaborate creed needs a glossary.

Several inquiries deserve answer respecting the ob-

solete in style. When does a word become obsolete? "Whereof the memory of man runneth not to the contrary" is the hint given by Dr. Campbell and others; that is, if a word has not been in current use within the memory of any man living, it must be considered as lost to the living tongue. This appears reasonable: scholarly taste has suggested no better principle.

Should obsolescent words be retained? Critics agree, as a general thing, in the negative. Words usually die, as men do, because of some infirmity. They are ill formed, or difficult of enunciation, or redundant, or inferior to their synonyms; or that which called them into being has ceased to be. For one reason, or more, the words are not needed; and the national mind parts with them unconsciously. None but a decadent people will commonly permit a valuable word to die.

But exceptions to the general rule exist, in which scholarly effort is needed to keep a good word alive. When the loss of a word would cause an obvious deterioration of a language, then culture should exert its influence to conserve the word. Professor Lowell says, that "an archaism is permissible when a word has been supplanted by one less apt, and yet has not become unintelligible." An obsolescent word may be necessary to the precision of a language. The word "concept" is an old English word, signifying, not the act of conceiving, but the idea conceived. It passed out of use for a time; and "conception" took its place, and is now used to signify both the act and the thing. But Sir William Hamilton has revived the more ancient word, because it adds to the philosophical precisior of the language to have two words to express the two ideas.

The obsolescence of a word may indicate a moral decay in the language, and may for that reason be wisely

arrested. The Italians have permitted the word *virtuoso* to lose its old element of moral virtue, and to decline to the expression of a "connoisseur of art." The French have suffered the word *honnêteté* to lose its original sense of "honesty," and to descend to the idea of "civility." In both these cases the languages would have been the richer if the old significations had been retained. Milton saved some words to our language, which in his day were obsolescent, but which he thought ought not to die. Missionaries in heathen lands are sometimes able to secure a new medium of appeal to the heathen mind by resuscitating obsolescent words which the nations are losing through the decay of their moral sensibilities, and therefore of moral ideas.

What principle should govern the use of obsolete words in poetry? The general taste of scholars makes an exception to the rule in behalf of obsolete words in poetic style. The necessities of rhythm often require this. A reason for it exists also in the nature of poetry. The distance of an object quickens the play of the imagination towards it. An obsolete phraseology, therefore, is in keeping with the design of poetic expression. The style of Spenser in "The Faerie Queene" is designedly archaic. He multiplied obsolete and obsolescent words purposely, in order to throw back the style into a bygone age. Guizot thinks that Shakspeare, in "King Lear," intentionally violated grammatical construction in order to locate the drama in a period in which the language was in its infancy. Dramatic congruity admits of this license.

What principle should guide us in the use of obsolete words in prayer? Prayer in this respect partakes of the nature of poetry. German critics have suggested, that, rhetorically considered, prayer *is* poetry. A rev

erent diction like the poetic invites a certain infusion of the antique element. Therefore we retain the obsolete termination of verbs in "th." We say "maketh," "believeth," "saith." This is not pure English in oratorical style, but it is such in the precative style.

What principle should regulate the use of the obsolete forms "thou" and "thou art" in homiletic appeals to an audience? A preacher sometimes has occasion to appeal to an audience circuitously, not by direct hortation to the individual. It may be a wise expedient to give to the appeal a form which shall affect the imagination by addressing it to humanity in the abstract. You say, therefore, "Who art thou, O man, that repliest against God?" Professor Tholuck closes one of his sermons with a prolonged exhortation, which, translated into English, has this form. The more direct form of "you" is avoided. This is obsolete English; but as an exception to the general rule, and as one variety of indirect appeal, it is permissible.

It is worthy of notice, that familiarity with our English version of the Scriptures exposes us to the peculiar peril of using certain forms of obsolete dialect. Although no other volume of equal antiquity is equally pure with the English Bible, yet some words, and forms of words, which are found in it, have become obsolete since King James's day. Preachers may insensibly fall into an obsolete dialect in the use of them. The termination of verbs in "eth" is the most notable example. The Puritans yielded so far to this tyranny of biblical use over their homiletic style, that they have left us an inheritance, in that respect, which has done much to alienate men of culture from their opinions. Not merely by the retention of obsolete phraseology, but by a singular attempt at imitation of the Scriptures in the construc-

tion of oral address, they created a hybrid dialect, which had not the merit of biblical quotation. Macaulay satirizes this feature in the speeches of the Earl of Crawford, contemporary with the Puritans, as unnatural, pedantic, and often ludicrous. We do not find extreme examples of this in our own pulpits; but relics of it remain, of sufficient note to put us on our guard. Just so far as we lodge our thoughts in an obsolete diction, we remove them to a refrigerant distance from the sympathies of modern mind. The men of to-day must be addressed in the speech of to-day. In giving force to language, sympathy is of more value than reverence.

Kindred to the error just noticed is one not peculiar to preachers. It is that in which a writer seeks for an obsolete style for effect. Even when this is prompted by a struggle to clothe a thought with power, it is objectionable. More power is lost than gained by the expedient. Hearers feel it to be an expedient, and the effect is to attract attention to the style by distracting attention from the thought. One often feels this defect in reading certain productions of De Quincey. It is true that force is sometimes gained by it, but it is an artificial force. Good taste approves only the force gained by the purest and simplest English. We need no other. Ours is an affluent language. Its vocabulary and constructions now in good use are the most abundant and vigorous in the world for the popular expression of the thought with which the Christian pulpit has to do.

2. Passing, now, from the consideration of an obsolete style, we observe another class of violations of purity, in the coining of novelties. Present usage being our standard, novel words, novel constructions, novel significations, do not belong to the language. The objec-

tion is as valid against a possibly future use as against one which time has ejected. A scholarly regard for English purity will act conservatively against new coinage.

Professor Park of Andover has observed that barbarisms from new coinage occur chiefly in three ways, — by the creation of new words, by the enlargement or contraction of old words, and by the compounding of old words. In an early edition of one of our two standard dictionaries the following words are found: "unwappered," "intersomnious," "circumbendibus," "jiggumbob," "solumnigate," "grammatication," "somniative," "scrimption," "solivagous," "slubberdegullion," "transmogrification." These are absolute creations by somebody. They are not English: they never have been. By what authority do they find a place in a dictionary of a civilized tongue? Their only becoming place is in that ancient lexicon in the British Museum to which I have alluded, as compiled, in part, of "words which signify nothing."

Contractions of old words appear chiefly in the form of vulgarisms. Contraction in speech is a most singular development of the natural *inertia* of the human mind. Even the tongue, the most nimble of human organs, will utter only that which it must utter. A syllable, a letter, an accent, which it can slur, it will slur. The contraction "ain't" for "isn't" is a vulgarism which ought not to need criticism. Yet "'tain't so" said an educated preacher once in my hearing. The safe rule respecting contractions is never to use them in public speech. This is the instinct of a perfect taste. It is said that Edward Everett never employed them, even in epistolary style. Some critics do not consider it fastidious to avoid them in colloquial usage.

Expansions of old words are more frequent in the

pulpit than contractions. "Preventative" and "intensitive" are examples: the pure forms are "preventive" and "intensive." Unauthorized prefixes and suffixes create a multitude of barbarisms. In a standard dictionary I find the following: "untriumph" "untrussed," "unuplifted," "unwormwooded," "unruinable," "unvulgarized," "unquarrelable," "unquaker," "unrenavigable," all coined, chiefly, by the unauthorized prefix "un" to words, which, either in part or in whole, are in good use. I find, also, "cockneyfy," "dandyize," "dandyling," "incoherentific," "imperiwigged," "fiddlefaddler," "sapientize," "wegotism," "weism," "perfectionation," "maximize," "pish-pash," "fiddle-de-dee," most of which are coined by unwarrantable additions to the end of good words. Such dictionaries are emphatically "dictionaries unabridged."

EXCURSUS.

At this point, a brief *excursus* deserves attention, on the inquiry, What is the best English dictionary for the use of an American author and public speaker? In answer, I remark first, that, in respect to purity of language, no dictionary now extant can be accepted as good authority. Both our standard lexicons, Webster's and Worcester's, are helps; but neither is a conclusive authority. Both have, in their later editions, been constructed on principles other than those which govern a scholar's vocabulary. They are both committed to the search for the largest number of words in use; not, by any means, all of them in good use. Neither the scholarly editors, nor the enterprising publishers, would venture to commend all the words in either as pure English; and the distinctions they make between words obsolete, and words vulgar, and words rare, can not

always be depended on. A scholarly writer is not safe in using every word which these dictionaries do not condemn, or question in point of purity. We greatly need a dictionary the equal of these in other respects, and at the same time a perfect standard of pure English.

Again: such are the excellences of the two rival dictionaries in question, that, if possible, an American scholar should own and consult both. They are invaluable monuments of scholarly work. We often need to compare them. When they differ, it is for a reason. The introductions and appendices of both volumes contain an immense fund of philological and historic literature found nowhere else in a form so compact. No other dictionary of the language equals either of them.

Further: if we must confine our studies chiefly to one dictionary, my judgment gives the preference to Webster's. We must be liberal enough to ignore the rivalship of Yale and Harvard Colleges in the matter. As a defining dictionary Webster's is certainly the superior. And this defining quality, it should be remembered, is the chief one for which we need a dictionary. Webster as the definer is undoubtedly the original. He had a marvelous power of exactness and brevity in analysis. Compare the earlier with the later editions of the two dictionaries, and you will see that Worcester is the larger debtor of the two. He and his editors have improved his work by accepting definitions which were original with Webster. Webster's editors have, to some extent, used Worcester's work in the same way, but not so largely.

The notes on synonyms, also, in Webster's work, are superior to those of Worcester. They form, in the

aggregate, the most exact dictionary of synonyms in the language. Further: Webster's later editors have, in the main, relieved his work from the innovations in orthography and etymology with which the first edition was encumbered. Whatever may be our personal preferences, there can be no question, in my judgment, that the present Websterian orthography is to be the standard of the future in our literature. An eminent publisher in New York has informed me that five-sixths of all the books published in this country conform now to Webster's orthography. The exceptions are confined chiefly to Boston and its suburbs. Webster's is the cosmopolitan dictionary. It is assuming that rank in England. Although, in one respect, I personally prefer Worcester, yet, acting on the principles I have advanced, of obedience to usage, I can no longer give to Worcester the supremacy.

The only point in which, in my view, Worcester is the superior, is that of pronunciation. Time, and successive editions of the two works, have jostled them into very near accordance with each other; so that they do not often differ. The pronunciation which one makes primary, the other often makes secondary, but allows its authority. In a multitude of cases, each thus salutes the scholarly authority of the other. But, when they flatly differ, Worcester commonly appears to me the more correct, because more exactly conforming to the philosophy and the history of the language. Worcester was at first the conservator; Webster, the reformer. The reformer often succeeds when the conservator is right. In philology the presumption is always on the side of the historic. If the novelty is the superior, that is to be proved. Genuine scholarship never vaults into change for the sake of change. It loves the old:

it clings to the long-tried. Yet often usage compels a change; and, when this is true, the change commonly favors the Websterian principles.

One of the most scholarly helps to a control of our mother-tongue is the habit of consulting Richardson's Dictionary. It is an expensive quarto, in two volumes, but a most valuable addition to a private library; not chiefly as an authority for English purity, but for the researches it contains in the history of words. Its illustrations of words by examples from extant English literature are innumerable, and are so arranged as to enable one to see the force of a word in its history from the earliest time to the present. I have never marveled at certain excellences in the style of the Rev. Professor Shedd, since I learned the fact of his early habit of reading by the hour Richardson's Dictionary. The expense of the work places it beyond the reach of many. I can only say to every author and public speaker, "Own it if you can."

Returning from this *excursus* upon dictionaries, I remark, that new words are sometimes created facetiously, and yet they find a lodgment in the language. De Quincey speaks of Suetonius, the story-teller of antiquity, as a "curious collector of anecdotage." Words originating in a facetious mood of authorship or oratory sometimes have a vitality to which no real worth in them should seem to entitle them. It is one of the collateral evidences that man was made to be happy, that the risible faculty has so much power as it has in public speech. Very little is required to make an audience laugh. The same principle it is, probably, which gives ready rootage to words which are coined by the risible emotions. A multitude of such words die; but,

if they express any genuine humor, they have peculiar chances of life.

It deserves remark, that writers coin many words, in the haste of composition, by adding the Greek termination "ize" to substantives. A new verb is thus created, which in not one case in a hundred becomes permanent in the language. "Jeopardize," "municipalize," "chartize," "deputize," I find almost at random in one volume. Scarcely ever do I receive a manuscript sermon in which I do not find one or more of these mongrels with the Greek tail. In one sermon I find eleven, not one of good authority.

Good words compounded by means of a hyphen are another form of barbarisms from new coinage. The pulpit, from time immemorial, has been in this respect, if not a "den of thieves," a nest of counterfeiters. "Heaven-descended," "soul-destroying," "God-forgetting," "God-defying" — but I should publish a "dictionary unabridged," if I should name all the counterfeit words of this construction for which the pulpit is responsible. Very few of these long-winded, long-waisted, long-tongued, long-tailed, and long-*eared* compounds, are authorized English. Yet it is difficult to decide at a glance whether they are such or not. Every one of the similar compounds which I have just employed to caricature them is found in use by the first class of English authors, though they are not all found in standard dictionaries. Why these, and not others, are good English, it is impossible to say, except that such is the omnipotent decree of usage.

A young writer has no protection against the barbarisms of this class, unless he finds it in his scholarly tastes and his scholarly reading. When once fixed in a writer's style, they form one of the most debilitating

features, especially in the style of a public speaker. The taste for them destroys the taste for monosyllabic words, on which the force of a spoken style so greatly depends. A subtle sympathy exists between these compounds and long, involuted sentences. Be not deceived, if occasionally they appear to strengthen style. In the general effect they dilute and flatten it. They invite a drawl in delivery. They *are* a drawl in expression. Few forms of mannerism run to such extremes as this, when once the scruples of good taste are broken down. Mrs. Henry Wood, in "Roland Yorke," speaks of the "not-attempted-to-be-concealed care." Another female author remarks upon "the-sudden-at-the-moment-though-from-lingering-illness-often-previously-expected death" of one of her heroines. It does not require scholarly erudition to decide that such a tape-worm as this has no proper place above ground. The taste which could tolerate it is hopeless barbarism. The next phase of such culture is cannibalism.

EXCURSUS.

A brief *excursus* deserves attention here upon certain improprieties, from new coinage, which have become famous in the history of theology and of philosophy, and which therefore may find their way into the dialect of the pulpit. Controversy has created them in both departments. The controversial fever often burns out of a man's style a healthy taste. Witness President Edwards's definition of "necessity." The "Essay on the Will" hinges on a pure invention in the meaning attached to that word. Edwards's idea of necessity, as he defines it, is not the English idea, is not the popular idea: it never was. It was not his own idea outside of the "Essay on the Will." In his sermons he falls back,

as other men of sense do, upon the popular idea. Even in the "Essay on the Will" he forgets his definition, and in some sections speaks of "necessity" and "freedom" as the common sense of men understands them. No preacher can accept Edwards's definition of "necessity," and preach it as the philosophical basis of his theology, without lapsing into fatalism. But no preacher can preach "necessity," as Edwards himself preaches it in his sermons, without preaching the freedom of the human will to the full dictates of human consciousness. The most conclusive answer to the weak point in Edwards's essay is the strong point in Edwards's sermons.

Another instance of impropriety from new coinage is found in Dr. Thomas Brown's definition of "cause" and "power." These are, perhaps, the most remarkable examples of deceptive definition to be found in the history of philosophy. The common mind has never, for a day, in any language, sanctioned Dr. Brown's idea of the meaning of these words. If we have not an intuition of something more than he understands by "power" and "cause," it can not be proved that we have any intuitions capable of expression in human language. The whole system of Dr. Brown's philosophy proceeds upon a philosophical invention of a new and unauthorized use of language.

Still another example of impropriety from new coinage is the theological use, by many of the schoolmen, of the words "guilt" and "punishment." It can not be proved (at least, it never has been proved) that the popular use of any language to which the Christian theology is known has ever sanctioned the theological use of these terms, as signifying only the "liability to suffering," and the "endurance of suffering," as a consequence of sin. The popular mind has always attached

to these words a moral idea. Guilt involves personal desert of suffering: punishment involves the penal infliction of suffering upon ill desert. Liability to suffering for the sin of another is not guilt: endurance of suffering for another's sin is not punishment. To say that Christ was punished for the sins of men is to say that he deserved to suffer for those sins. To say that men are guilty of Adam's sin is to say that they committed that sin. The Turretinian doctrine of the personal existence of the race in Adam, below the depths of individual consciousness, and back of the inventory of human memory, is the only theory of original sin which justifies such a use of language. But the human consciousness gives no such testimony, and therefore popular usage supports no such use of words. Be it one thing or another to scholastic theology, it is of no use to the pulpit; because it conveys no sense to the popular mind, to which conscience can respond.

That is one of the forms of historic theology, venerable as a fossil, which can not be preached. It never has been preached intelligibly, and with popular assent, to the common mind. The very dialect which expresses it is as pure an invention as that of alchemy or magic. The license which some writers take in coining new words, and giving new significations to words, reminds one of the cant of thieves, and clans of beggars, in London, who have coined *de novo* a dialect of their own, chiefly for the sake of being able to communicate with each other without detection by the police. Unlicensed coining should be left to such hands. It is no part of a scholar's work.

LECTURE III.

VIOLATIONS OF PURITY OF STYLE, CONTINUED.

RESUMING the discussion of the new coinage of words, we must observe a qualification of the principles already advanced, in the fact that the coinage of new elements of language is sometimes a necessity. We have observed, that the growth of a national civilization necessitates the growth of its language. No other one thing expresses a nation's mind so exactly as its language does. The growth of the language must be, in part, by new coinage. How, then, shall we judge when to reject, and when to employ, new words? By the common consent of scholars the following principles are recognized.

One is, that an acknowledged master of a science or of literary acquisitions may coin such new words as, in his judgment, the necessities of the language require. Modern physical science has received immense expansion. Its nomenclature is almost wholly new, created by experts in the sciences. Even mental science claims this prerogative. Coleridge claimed the right, as an expert in psychology, to introduce into our language the German distinction between the understanding and the reason. That use of these words is thus far technical to the science which has created it. If philosophers generally accept it, by the laws of good taste it becomes authoritative in our dictionaries. Criticism must not condemn it as a novelty or an importation. Mr. Grote,

in his "History of Greece," coins the word "dicast." It means nearly, yet not exactly, the same as our word "juryman." Mr. Grote therefore exercises his literary right as an historian to import the word from the Greek, which is its original. He can not otherwise express the idea without a cumbrous circumlocution.

Another principle which criticism admits is, that an acknowledged master of the English tongue may coin such words as, in his judgment, it requires for its precision or its affluence of expression. Scholarly taste allows this as one of the prerogatives of scholarly authorship. The prerogative is unquestioned in proportion to the critical care of the author who claims it. A new word used by Addison, Swift, Macaulay, Irving, Everett, would have a claim to recognition which a word coined by Carlyle would not have. The writers first named are known to have been scrupulous in their use of good English, and no other. Carlyle is notorious for his recklessness of scholarly taste, neither cherishing it himself, nor respecting it in others. De Quincey advances, as one test of an author's sway over the national mind, how many original words, phrases, idioms, significations, does he succeed in ingrafting upon the national tongue?

Another principle which critics admit with restrictions is, that some novelties in language may be created by authors of only provincial or local fame. "With restrictions," I say: criticism here only conforms to facts. The number of words thus originated is incalculable: the number that live is very small. It is the authors of inferior power and repute who are most free in such coinage: their authority is in inverse proportion to their presumption. Yet a small fraction of the language owes its origin to them. Robert Southey coined the word "deicide." He gave three reasons for it; that

it is in strict analogy with other words in good use, — "suicide," "fratricide," "parricide," "regicide;" that its meaning is obvious; and that no other word in the language expresses the same idea. Very good reasons these: it would be hard to answer them. Yet I do not know that the word has yet found its way into the usage of the first class of authors.

A fourth principle is, that it is a doubtful experiment with any man to add a word to his native tongue. The creation of a word is a great assumption over human thought. It is a challenge to a nation's mind. It may be an assault on a nation's prejudices. It may be resisted by the whole momentum of a nation's history. It may be ejected by the force of a nation's whims. The chances are as a thousand to one against its success. Such a word may have every scholarly quality in its favor, and yet it may die of sheer neglect. It dies without so much as a burial. The nation often does not resist it, does not argue about it, but simply says, "We do not want it." Cicero had no superior as an authority in Roman literature, yet he failed more frequently than he succeeded in his attempts to improve the vernacular of his countrymen. The same is true of Milton and of Coleridge, both of whom were students of the forces of language, masters of racy English, and experimenters in the creation of novel words.

A fifth principle bearing upon the subject grows out of a peculiarity of modern literature: it is, that new coinage by journalists should be accepted with great caution. Journalists are a class of writers of recent origin. They include in their guild very many rudely educated men. They write much in haste; they write by shorthand; they write often in a somnolent state, in the small hours of the morning. The consequence is,

that they coin words recklessly. Theirs is not often leisurely and scholarly authorship. Very few of them attain to the first rank in literature. Where can be found among them the peer of Bryant? Their suggestions of new words are often crude. One of them, for example, proposes the word "thalagram," to express a message through the Atlantic cable. He coins it from Greek originals. But, so far as I know, no second writer has approved it, and for the very good reason, that nobody needs it. Why do we need any other than the word "telegram"? We say, "A telegram from Chicago," as we say, "A telegram from London." Why do we need a word to remind us that the one came from under the sea, more than a word to remind us that the other came through a line of cedar posts and insulated wires? Good taste forbids overloading the language with rubbish. A language should be like a library, well selected, not conglomerated. This new coin, "thalagram," has fallen flat on the national taste, as it is to be hoped will be the fate of the still more wretched medley, "cablegram." Two languages are searched for the rubbish which is patched to make this barbarism. The decisive test of new coinage in a language is the question of necessity. Does the language need it? If not, no other reason for it can commend it to good taste.

A sixth principle which I find that the usage of good writers practically applies to the subject is, that authors of the first class, acknowledged by all others as literary authorities, may *occasionally* coin a word which they would not recommend as good English, and would not introduce into a standard dictionary if they could. They may do it as an exception to their general rule. Thus Coleridge writes: "If the reader will pardon an

uncouth and new-coined word, there is, I should say, not seldom, a *matter-of-fact-ness* in certain poems." Coleridge here coins a word, which, though he was very unequal in his choice of English, he evidently would not recommend. He apologizes for it. He employs it exceptionally. The liberty to do this is a perilous one: a young writer may more wisely refrain from assuming it. The tendency to corruption is so strong, that while one's style is in the process of formation, as it is in the early years of one's practice, the safe course is, not to use any word which writers of the first order would not recommend, as well as indulge exceptionally. Yet the indulgence in question must be named because it exists, and it is sometimes indulged by the best writers. We can not hope to enforce a style which is better than the best.

Professor James Russell Lowell, for example, is one of the most scholarly critics and authors in our language. A word coined by him with expressed approval would carry all the authority which any one man's name can give to a word. But when he coins, as he does, such words as "cloudbergs" and "otherworldliness" and "Dr. Wattsiness," he descends from style to slang. He coins them as an exceptional and rare indulgence. He does not expect to see them in the next edition of Worcester's Dictionary. He would be ashamed to see them there with his name as their authority. He would be the last man to authorize such words by scholarly criticism. If an orthodox minister should coin them, the author of the "Biglow Papers" would be the first to satirize them as tokens of the barbarism of the pulpit. He knows, and the world of scholars knows, that his own scholarly reputation will bear such occasional departures from good English, somewhat as a very

saintly man can bear to be seen carrying a flask of brandy in the street. That which is a literary peccadillo from Professor Lowell's pen may be unscholarly slovenliness from the pen of one unknown to fame. It is due to fact, I repeat, to recognize this exceptional license in authors of good repute, because it is a fact; yet we do not thereby commend it as a rule, nor even as an exception. It exists: that is all that we can say of it.

3. Similar to the effect of unnecessary novelties upon a pure style is that of needless importation of foreign contributions to the language. The vernacular tongue is the tongue of a man who means to be understood. We commit a barbarism if we import a foreign word when an English word will express our thought as well.

It deserves mention, first, that this error is often caused by a pedantic attachment to foreign languages. Professors of the Greek language often think in Greek. They use a Greek word, therefore, when no poverty of the English tongue creates the necessity. In the seventeenth century the taste of English scholars was infected with a morbid preference for the Latin language to their own. This led to the introduction of extremely ungainly words, which good use has never adopted. Milton's style is defaced by such words as "ludibundness," "subsammation," "septemfluous." Even Milton's authority has not forced these words into the language: the national good sense has been too strong for that. Dr. Samuel Johnson's Latinized style is one of the fruits of a similar freak in the taste of a later age. In him it manifested itself, not only in the use of words not English, but in distorting the proportion of words of Latin to those of Saxon derivation, and in an imitation of Latin construction also, which renders his style one of the most foreign to the genius of our language to be found in our litera

ture. Yet his was a mind compact with sturdy and solid English elements, which gave to his literary opinions, as Carlyle says, "a gigantic calmness." They made his conversation the antipodes of his written style. In conversation he was racy, laconic, fleet: in writing he was ponderous, lumbering, logy. In conversation he was an antelope: in his books he was a whale.

Again: an undue regard for the etymology of words often leads to improprieties from foreign importation. A word often has in its Greek or Latin root a meaning which its English form has entirely lost. You find a familiar illustration of this in the word "prevent," which King James's translators of the Bible, following the usage of their age, have retained in its etymological meaning, — a meaning which later usage has abandoned. Many contested passages in Shakspeare depend on the question, whether he adopted the pure English, or the etymological English, of his times. Meaningless words become rich in sense, and obscure words become clear often, in his plays, by reading them, not as modern English, but with their etymology in mind. An affectation of etymological science is apt to infect the style of a writer who reads more in foreign languages than in his own. De Quincey is often guilty of this. It is the more inexcusable defect in a modern author; because he has what Shakspeare and Milton had not, — a matured language at his command.

Further: the composite character of our English tongue has a twofold bearing upon the question of admitting importations. Our language is largely made up of accretions from abroad. It is, in this respect, very unlike the ancient Greek and Latin languages and the modern German. Those were, to a great extent, evolved from internal resources. Our own language grows very

slowly by such evolution. Its history is a history of innovations. As our national stock is a composite one, made up from many tributary migrations, so our language is a composite product, made up from almost all the civilized languages on the globe. If we want a new word, we instinctively go for it to some foreign source. Thus the English nomenclature of the natural sciences is almost wholly Greek and Latin. One critic contends that ours is a decadent tongue, because it shows so little power of growth from within. This composite character of our language, I repeat, has a twofold bearing on the question of foreign imports.

It should render our taste tolerant of such imports, when they are necessary to the affluence of the language. This being the composite structure of it, an importation from abroad is a less evil than it was to the Greek language of the Augustan age. It does less violence to the genius of the English than it did to that of the Augustan Greek. Some importations every language must have. Every finished language has words for ideas which no other language expresses as well. We are already borrowing some philosophical words from Germany. We are obliged to do so, because we borrow the ideas there. Some French words express ideas which no corresponding English terms express as well. De Quincey asks, How can the idea of a "post-office" be expressed in Greek? or that of a "coquette," in Hebrew? If a language needs the foreign word to give utterance to the foreign thought, it must import the foreign word. Words are made for thought, not thought for words.

But, on the other hand, the composite structure of our language should make us intolerant of importations when they are needless. This dependence on foreign sources for linguistic growth is an evil. Any language

will be the more symmetrical, and free from anomalies, if developed from its native stock. A graft makes a gnarl in a tree: so does an importation make a protuberance in a language. Let the natural resources, therefore, be developed if they can be: let us take the alien tribute, only when we must. There was great significance in Cæsar's rule of composition: "Always shun, if possible, the *insolens verbum*."

4. Purity of style is further impaired by the needless use of provincialisms. National usage being our standard, that is not pure English which has only sectional authority, unless sectional necessities compel its use.

It should be remarked, however, that words of provincial origin often become good English. Such words may force their way into universal use. All words begin to be somewhere. They may have at first a small constituency. Many of the most impressive words in the language had a provincial origin. The word "caucus" is of American birth: it was first used by old Samuel Adams. Now no English dictionary would be complete without it.

Further: words remaining provincial may be good English. They may be necessitated by provincial peculiarities, — peculiarities of climate, of soil, of productions, of institutions, of history. Americanisms, especially, are very numerous, which must still be accepted on the score of provincial necessity. "Senatorial," "gubernatorial," "mileage," "prairie," "backwoods," "clearings," "pine-barrens," "savannas," "federalist," "nullifiers," "anti-renters," "freesoilers," "proslavery," and many others, have been created by peculiarities in our provincial soil, or climate, or institutions, or history. The late civil war has created words which are on probation. It remains to be seen whether the national mind will accept that

event as important enough to force into the language new creations.

A remarkable instance of provincial phraseology in Great Britain, which has no lodgment in this country, is the phrase "Hear! hear!" which in the House of Commons, and, so far as I know, nowhere else, has four different meanings, depending on the tones on which the phrase is uttered. A member of Parliament expresses by it assent, or admiration, or indignation, or derision. The tones expressive of these varieties of emotion are well-defined and understood in parliamentary usage. Americans do not understand them. Yet such provincialisms, remaining such, are good English, because necessary to the ideas they carry. Again, the word is for the thought, not the thought for the word. We can not afford to lose a thought through antipathy to the form of its utterance.

5. Provincialisms are scarcely more destructive to purity of style than the needless use of technical and clannish phraseology. National usage again being the scholarly standard, words peculiar to class, or science, or the professions, are not good English till necessity has given them the right to be.

Religious writings are specially exposed to this class of errors. The intensity of religious thinking and feeling aggravates the peril. Peculiarities of sect are prone to express themselves in bad English. Would any thing but a mania of conscience ever have led a respectable religious sect to thrust into modern use the obsolete forms "thou" and "thee," and specially the monstrous anomaly found among educated persons in Philadelphia, — "Thee is"? This is parallel to the solecism of the negro dialect, — "you am." Would any thing but the Puritan type of religious fervor ever have created such

long-tailed abominations as "worldly-mind-edness" and "spiritually-mind-edness"?

The fact deserves a moment's notice, that the style of the modern American pulpit has been infected by its inheritance of a Puritan vocabulary. Not all is true of the Puritans in this respect which literary criticism often charges upon them. The cant of the Puritans and the cant of literature may be fairly made to offset each other. The Puritans were not, as a class, unscholarly men. They had their full proportion of learned authors and scholarly preachers. At the outset of the Puritan movement in the Church of England, there was no perceptible peculiarity in the Puritan dialect. The difference is very striking between the earlier and the later Puritans. Style degenerated as controversy became heated. Their ideas were novel. They were representatives of a religious revolution. Their faith was scouted, and their persons insulted. In response, they preached their convictions intemperately. Their religious experience took on forms antipathetic to the cultured irreligion of their times. Hence swarmed the multitude of their clannish phrases. It is not strange that men who thought, as they did, in revolutionary heat, and felt, as they did, a new baptism, as of fire, should have had the sense of literary propriety burned out of them. Still, our inheritance of their dialect is not a desirable one. Errors which were pardonable in them are not so in us who live in a calmer age.

Furthermore: some of the technical phrases of theology which we owe to this ancestral source are not the most truthful forms of the ideas they express. The phrase "original sin," for example, is one of the most unfortunate products of sin in this world. The popular mind has never originated it, so far as I know, in any

language, nor has it ever originated any thing exactly corresponding to it. The phrase always needs clerical explanation, before people get from it an intelligible idea. The common conscience, if unsophisticated, never uses it in expressing the consciousness of sin. But one man of all the human race ever did so. He was a native of New Jersey. In a celebrated case of ecclesiastical dispute, he was called into court as a witness. In response to the question of one of the counsel, he testified that he felt himself guilty of Adam's sin; and, when asked what was the evidence of it, he declared solemnly that he "thought he remembered it." Men of less venerable memory, if you can make them understand the phrase "original sin," will resent the charge of guilt on account of it as an indignity to their conscience and an insult to their common sense. Such a phrase is not a desirable one in which to teach a vital doctrine of our faith. Such technicalities of theology are better out of the language than in it. Store them in the history of theology if you will, as phrases by which somebody once meant something; but the modern pulpit, which has to deal with living men and women, is needlessly encumbered by them. The pulpit should specially apply to them the next remark, to which we return from this digression.

When pure living English will express a thought at all, it will do so better than any hybrid religious dialect can do it — more clearly, more exactly, more forcibly. Dr. Chalmers makes the following entry in his diary: "I feel that I do not come close enough to the heart and the experience of my people. I begin to think that the phraseology of the old writers must be given up for one more accommodated to the present age." Dr. Thomas Arnold, in the preface to a volume of his ser-

mons, expresses a similar view: "I have tried to write in such a style as might be used in real life, in serious conversation with our friends." This is an admirable hint to a preacher. We do not talk to our friends in real life in a style made up of technicalities and cant phrases. Why should we preach in such a style? Every young preacher should read John Foster's "Essay on the Causes of the Aversion of Men of Taste to Evangelical Religion."

The principle before us, however, admits the use of religious technicalities when they are necessary. Some of them are necessary. As natural science needs its nomenclature, which is never heard from the lips of the national majority, so theological science must have certain words without which some of its ideas can not be well expressed. Again, the word for the thought, not the thought for the word. "Regeneration," "conversion," "faith," "justification," "atonement," — these words in religious usage have significations peculiar to that usage, and necessary to its freedom and precision.

We have a striking illustration of the necessary use of technicalities in the style of the New Testament. The Christian apostles had to express Christian ideas in heathen dialects. They could not do it in a classic style. The Greek, the purest and most finished of all living languages, had been molded to fit heathen thought, and that only. Its literature was a heathen literature. Its vocabulary was expanded only to cover the wants of a heathen civilization. What could the pioneer apostles of a new religion do with it? They employed old words in new senses. They created new words. By technical adroitness they forced into the old vocabulary new ideas. A weight and a wealth of meaning were crowded into the vocabulary of Plato, of which Plato

had no conception. Such words as "humility," "penitence," "angel," "martyr," "apostle," "paradise," "regeneration," all owe their present significance to the apostolic license in originating new meanings for them. Was it pure Greek? No. Was it, therefore, barbarous Greek? No. Necessity demanded the innovation, and necessity is supreme.

A similar phenomenon occurred centuries later, when Christian preachers first preached Christianity in the Teutonic languages. They could not do it in the pure tongues of the North, any more than the apostles had done it in the pure tongues of the South. The Scandinavian dialects could not express that which had been too lofty and too spiritual for the Greek of Thucydides. Like sensible men, the preachers of the new faith did the only thing they could do. They used old words and new with new senses, — for the time, technical senses, — but which at length lifted the languages to their own level, and sent them upon a new career of development and enrichment.

6. The most unscholarly violations of purity consist of vulgarisms. Reputable usage being our standard, only that is pure style which has the authority of authors and speakers of national fame. Several things here deserve attention. One is, that the adoption in dignified writings of the usage of the illiterate is the chief source of corruption to any language. The language of common life is full of slang: nothing controls it but the taste of scholars. It is intelligible, often forcible: its very vulgarity gives it a rude strength. A large class of middlemen between the scholars and the vulgar do not know enough, or do not care enough, about the principles of taste, to refrain from slang in their own practice. Newspapers constantly seek noto-

riety by the use of it. A vast amount of the facetiousness of journalists is made up of it. It is, therefore, an ever open doorway for the inroad of corrupt taste into scholarly usage.

The class of dignified productions most seriously imperiled by temptation to the use of vulgarisms is that of oral addresses. The pen is a scholar's instrument, and often a scholar's protection from literary degeneracy. Political speeches, sermons, addresses on festal occasions, are addressed chiefly to the illiterate. Educated mind thus seeks intercourse with ignorant mind. Oral address is also employed often, to amuse, to please, to influence, on its own level, the uneducated mind. The temptation, therefore, often overpowers scholarly taste, to use the dialect of the masses; not only its pure Saxon elements, than which the language contains nothing better, but its short-lived and low-lived vulgarities as well.

Sir Walter Scott says, that, early in life, he was disgusted with evangelical religion by the vulgarisms of certain Methodist preachers, who gave him all the conceptions he had at that time of the evangelical faith. Who shall say how much of the subsequent irreligion of Scott's life, his intense worldliness, his profaneness, his misrepresentations of Puritan character, may have been traceable to that lurch of his mind in the wrong direction produced by the violence done to his scholarly tastes by the Methodist pulpit? Many converts under that Methodist preaching might not compensate the cause of Christ for the loss of one such as Walter Scott. Imagine that, by means of a scholarly pulpit, he had in his youth become, as it is to be hoped he did become on his death-bed, a spiritual Christian. What a channel might have been opened for the flow of a

stream of Christian literature during the now more than sixty years in which Scott has been a power in the literature of the English tongue! He created in our language the department of historic fiction. The scenes and scenery and characters he painted were identified with the most thrilling events in the Christian history of Europe. Conceive that his life's work had been thoroughly Christianized in its spirit, that his opinions had been fair to the Puritan period in English history, that his heroes and heroines had been representatives of the Christian type of character, that the moral purpose of his productions had been tributary to Christian ideas, that he had been to English fiction what Milton was to English poetry: who can measure the revolution he might have wrought in the interest of spiritual Christianity? Those Methodist preachers may not have achieved so much by their whole ministry as they might have done by the conversion of that one man.

LECTURE IV.

PURITY OF STYLE, CONTINUED; REASONS FOR ITS CULTIVATION.

THE question is not an unnatur alone, — probably every public speaker asks it when his attention is first called to the subject, — Is the use of scholarly English of sufficient practical value to repay one for the time and labor it will cost to acquire it and to make it habitual? If I make myself understood as a public speaker, do I not accomplish the great object of speaking? Is not a scrupulous regard for a scholarly selection of words the fruit of a squeamish taste? At the most, is it not an accomplishment of literary leisure rather than a necessity to literary labor? Specially, is it not burdensome to the business of a practical profession? A pastor may, more plausibly than other men, say, "To me, public speaking is a business: I perform it in pursuit of great necessities. I am over-worked by the labors incident to it. I have neither taste nor time to cultivate the niceties of scholastic diction. If I can say what I find it in me to say, in language which plain men understand, and to which they will give a hearing, my ambition does not rise higher than that." This plea of professional necessity in practice prevents very many pastors from exercising the prerogative of educated men as conservators of pure English.

1. Let it be observed, then, that literary authority is

uniform in support of purity as the foundation of the most effective style. Cicero declares this in unqualified terms; and in so doing he speaks the judgment of the ablest authors, speakers, critics, of all time. No writer of distinction depreciates it theoretically. Carlyle represents a class of authors who ignore it practically, but I do not know that he has ever written a line decrying it in theory. Literary opinion claims for it the rank of a practical necessity. It is not primarily an accomplishment, but a power. Speakers should cultivate it, because they need it. It is the most direct and effective instrument for their purpose. The best style for all the ends of public discourse is a pure style. This is the ground taken by literary opinion on the subject. It ought to be authoritative to any public speaker of sufficient education to enable him to understand the argument. The scholarly judgment of the world would not be thus uniform if it were not true.

2. But, more specifically, a pure style is tributary to the most perfect perspicuity of expression. When an objector says, "If I make myself understood, let that suffice," he begs the question. The surest way to be understood is to speak your pure mother-tongue. Perspicuity is relative to the intelligence of hearers, but pure English all hearers understand. The provincial dialects of Great Britain are such, that the people of different shires can with difficulty understand each other; but pure English they all understand. A speaker who employs classic English can go from one end of the kingdom to the other, and be perfectly understood by people who can scarcely make themselves intelligible to one another. Yet an eminent English critic, speaking of the English peasantry, says that "a rustic's language, purified from all provincialism and grossness, and so far

reconstructed as to be consistent with the rules of grammar, will not differ from the language of any other man of common sense." That is to say, the popular dialects of Great Britain comprise, for their staple in colloquial use, good English. It requires but a sprinkling of provincial words to make a *patois*. Pure English in place of these makes a perfect instrument of popular speech.

The chief reason why the English Bible is so clear, except where the argument is abstruse, is, that its vocabulary is such pure and simple English. It is this which gives to the English Scriptures their clearness, prolonged to successive generations. They were published in the same age with Spenser's "Faerie Queene." Now the "Faerie Queene" needs a glossary, while the Bible is as intelligible as ever. Two hundred and fifty years is a long while for the lifetime of a book. No book can live so long which is not written in the purest vernacular of the people. One of the reasons of the sway of the Bible over the other literature of the English tongue is that its style is so pure. An accomplished expert in English literature says that "our poetry could not have been, as it is, the noblest body of poetry in the world, if the divines and scholars of King James's era had taken it upon themselves to translate the Bible into the polite language of the court, or into any other than that used by the common people." The secret of the sway of the Scriptures over English literature is, that, by using in a scholarly way the language of the people, our translators fell back upon the purest vocabulary of their times; and that vocabulary continues to be perspicuous to all classes of mind to this day. The purest style is not only the most perspicuous for the time being, but it has the longest heritage of perspicuity to subsequent generations. The purest style has the longest life.

3. Purity is tributary, also, to the most forcible style. A vernacular tongue carries weight because it is vernacular. Indefinable magnetic threads connect the pure vernacular with the sensibilities of the people who use it. Love of language is more potent than love of country. The native country, men call the *father*-land: the native language, they call the *mother*-tongue. The ballads of a nation which move its sensibilities most profoundly are written in the purest dialect. That which Milton said of books is more profoundly true of a great nation's language in its untainted purity: "Books are not dead things, but they do carry a potency of life in them." So that style in the pulpit which "carries a potency of life" in it to the hearts of hearers is the style in which they recognize their purest vernacular vocabulary. They feel it as their own. It has roots running under their whole intellectual life, and going back to their infancy. Swiss soldiers in the Austrian service used to be forbidden to sing their country's songs in their native tongue because it tempted so many to desertion.

This force of a vernacular style is the more powerful in the English language because of the intrinsic vigor of its chief fundamental element, the Saxon. "Saxon" has become a synonym of "strong." This is the element most active in the vitality of the English Bible, to which I have referred. How long could the Lord's Prayer in English form live if it had been translated into Latinized English like that of Sir Thomas Browne? I will not do violence to our associations with it by subjecting it to caricature; but suppose the style of it to have been as technical to religious thought as the following is to the science of medicine. A lady has died suddenly, and the reporter thus describes the

event: "An autopsy was held, which revealed extensive cardiac disease, consisting of hypertrophy, with aneurism of the aorta just below its bifurcation, the rupture of which was the proximate cause of dissolution." It requires a classical scholar to understand from this that the person died of heart-disease. How long would the readers of that rural newspaper continue their use of the Lord's Prayer if it had been taught to them by our translators in such a style as this?

4. One reason for cultivating a pure English style should have special weight with preachers. It is the intrinsic superiority of pure English for the purposes of religious discourse.

Languages are valuable chiefly, for the uses which have created their history. Christian preachers find a well-nigh insuperable difficulty in preaching the gospel in some heathen tongues, because those tongues have never been used to express Christian ideas or the offshoots of those ideas. They have been framed upon and around heathen thought. They have crystallized around a heathen literature. Heathen institutions have made them what they are. The gospel could never have been preached in the language of Homer. The vocabulary of Livy and Tacitus could never have contained the doctrine of justification by faith. The English language, on the contrary, is the reverse of the ancient classic languages in respect to the point here indicated. It has been created under Christian institutions. Its most vital period of growth has been synchronous with the most vital growth of Christianity. The literature of the language is substantially a Christian literature. The vocabulary has been used in the direct and exact expression of Christian ideas, to an

extent not equaled in the history of any other language, dead or living. Not a Christian thought exists which must go outside of the English tongue for a clear, precise, forcible utterance. As a consequence, no other language is so well fitted as this for the purpose of Christian discourse; and the fitness is just in proportion to the degree to which the language is used in its purity.

Moreover, the genius of the English mind has given to the language the resources which specially adapt it to the work of a preacher, as distinct from that of scholastic research. The English mind is pre-eminently the practical mind of modern times. As the German is the philosophic, and the French the scientific, so the English is the national mind most heartily given to the practical civilization of the age. The English are also a nation of public speakers. The same is true of the American people. In no other countries in the world is language so much used in public oral discourse as in these. In the eloquence of the pulpit, of the bar, of the senate, of the platform, our language is the best fitted for use, in part because it is most abundantly used in all these varieties of public speech. Such a language as this, with such a history behind it, and the forces of such a history in its structure, deserves to be employed with scholarly care. An indirect method of preaching the gospel is to conserve this pre-eminently Christian tongue from degeneracy. This should be the work of all Christian scholars.

Lest the estimate here given of the intrinsic value of our language should seem extravagant, let me give the testimony of European scholars. The first is that of Jacob Grimm, the German lexicographer. From the midst of the most learned etymological studies of the

age he once sent forth this tribute to a language not his own. "The English language," he wrote, "has a veritable power of expression such as, perhaps, never stood at the command of any other language of men. Its spiritual genius, its wonderfully happy development, have been the result of a surprisingly intimate union of the two noblest languages of modern Europe, — the Teutonic and the Romanza. In truth, the English tongue, which by no mere accident has produced and upborne the greatest poet of modern times, may with all right be called a world-language. Like the English people, it appears destined to prevail, with a sway more extensive even than its present, over all portions of the globe. For in wealth, good sense, and closeness of structure, no other languages at this day spoken, not even our German, deserve to be compared to it." This is the judgment of a German, who would not needlessly exalt a foreign tongue at the expense of his own. It is the judgment of a philologist, who would not indulge in declamation on such a theme. It is the judgment of one of the most learned men of the age, who knew whereof he affirmed.

The late Baron Humboldt expressed, not long before his decease, substantially the same opinion of the capacities of the English as compared with the classic languages of antiquity. The Academy of Berlin once gave a prize for the best essay on a comparison of fourteen of the ancient and modern tongues. The prize was awarded to Jenisch, and the essay assigned the palm of excellence over all the rest to the English. Guizot claims the superiority, in some respects, for the French tongue; yet he concedes the pre-eminence of Shakspeare over all other modern poets, and affirms that Shakspeare could not have written his unequaled dramas in

any other than the English language. No English, no Shakspeare, is the gist of his criticism. I record these testimonies as authorities which deserve respect. I do not profess to speak *ex cathedra* on the subject. The point to which I would bend such testimony is this, that such a language deserves protection from decadence and corruption. Its purity is its glory. Scholarly taste ought to stand sentinel over such a national treasure in the persons of the authors and public speakers who use the language in dignified discourse.

5. Another reason for the scholarly conservation of our language in its purity is the fact that the knowledge and the use of it are rapidly extending over the nations of the world. It is now the mother-tongue of the masters of one-fourth of the civilized globe. De Quincey expresses the opinion that the English and the Spanish are destined to contest the control of the civilization of the future. Why the Spanish should be thought able to engage in such a competition I do not know, unless it be that Spain has been what England is, — the great colonizing power of the globe. Its language, therefore, has a lodgment at many commanding points on both continents. A short time ago seventeen different governments corresponded with the department of state at Washington in Spanish, — a larger number, probably, than that of correspondents in any other tongue. Alison the historian gives it as the result of his studies of the institutions of Europe, that the language of half the world, for ages, will be our own. Other ethnologists and philologians express the same or a similar opinion.

Such anticipations, I am aware, appear visionary at the first view. I remember when, many years ago, I expressed, much more dubiously than I should now do

it, the belief that the destiny of our language is to surpass that of any other living tongue, as well as the history of the ancient classic tongues, a ripple of incredulity went over my audience visibly and audibly. The criticism was set down, I doubt not, as the dream of an enthusiast. But since that time, as this class of studies has commanded more attention, our language and literature have come to command more respect. The opinion in question has forced itself upon statesmen and travelers, as well as upon experts in linguistic researches. Several facts deserve record, which support it beyond reasonable question, and which bring it within range of the judgment of any educated man.

EXCURSUS.

The facts here alluded to are of sufficient importance in their bearing on the main subject to justify a digression upon the destiny of the English language.

One is the fact, that our language has possession of the northern half of the American continent. Looking at the question in geographical relations, this fact is much to the purpose. We need not indulge in any visionary conjectures of the future population of this country, dreaming, as many do, of hundreds of millions crowding this portion of the continent. We do not know what latent causes may affect the laws of population here. The distant future is problematical always in the growth of great nations. Occult powers often defeat those which seem to foretell a splendid destiny. This continent has been all but depopulated once, and it may be so again if national character demands that in the economy of the divine plans. Great and sudden cataclysms, sweeping nations off the globe, are among the mysterious instruments of the world's progress.

Wiser men than we must they be who shall safely say that these can not occur in the future, as they have occurred in the past. But it is philosophical to accept present causes as tending to certain results which can safely be pronounced probable. For the present purpose, it is sufficient to say, that, whatever North America is to be in the brotherhood of nations, that the English language is to be among the national tongues, and the English literature among the literatures of the world. English words, English idioms, English constructions, are to express the national mind here existing and to be.

In the second place, it is not as certain, but it seems reasonably probable, that the southern half of this continent is to come under the same English dominion De Quincey's prognostications in behalf of the Spanish tongue may have been founded on its establishment in Central and South America, among the now ruling races there. But how long, without a new infusion of life to arrest the decadence of every thing Spanish, can that language stand the pressure of the English thought and speech which are crowding southward? To human wisdom the ill-timed experiment of Maximilian was the expiring effort of the Latin stock to perpetuate itself in great empires there. The Spanish language, with its South American dialects, is not extending its sway. It is not ripening. No new literature of any force is growing up in it. The races which speak it are developing no new life from within. The most vitalizing forces they are receiving are from without the Spanish range of ideas. They are from races which speak English, from institutions which are built on English thought, from literature which is written in the English tongue, from a commerce which is mainly supported by English capital,

and ruled by English brains. Political questions are insignificant in comparison with the prospective ascendency there of the English language and the literature which it embodies.

Further: our language has a lodgment in Australia, in Africa, and in India, where, beyond all question, large and wealthy and powerful nations are to exist, speaking English as the dialect of all that is noblest in their civilization. Even in India, English is perceptibly gaining ground upon the native dialects as the language of culture. Some sanguine scholars in Calcutta anticipate the time when it will supplant those dialects. East-Indian degradations, in some respects the most degraded the human mind has ever known, tend to drag down into oblivion, and thrust out of human memory, the very languages which contain them, and have become saturated with them. Why not? What more effective way can the Nemesis of corrupt nations devise for ridding them and the world of such enormities? If such a language as the Latin could die, why not other tongues, which have not in them a tithe of the treasure which the Latin had, which the world would "not willingly let die."

In the fourth place, the English bids fair to be the language of the Pacific islands. It is not learning and culture chiefly, which extend the sway of a national tongue: it is commerce. Through English and American commerce, our language is forestalling all other powerful tongues which can compete with it in the groups of Pacific islands. This may give to it a grander sway than at the first appears. In all history, insular power has been great and long-lived. It may be so in the future. At all events, whatever the Pacific islands are to be, and whatever part they are to act in the

world's future, that the English language is to be, and that, English thought, in English idioms of speech, is to do.

The fact also deserves more particular notice, that English is the language of colonization and of commerce the world over. Those agencies which are most effective in extending commerce, and colonizing new lands, are rooted in the nations to which English speech is vernacular. In these lines of expansion, the French, the Spanish, and the German — the only tongues which in other respects can compete with ours — have no future comparable with that of ours. The absorption of them, wherever they come into rivalship with English on a large scale and on a new soil, is only a question of time. If new and uninhabited lands are to be discovered on the globe, the chances are, that the first foot planted on their soil will be that of an Englishman or an American, and that the first word of human speech heard there will be from our mother-tongue. Even in Central Europe, English is gaining ground as the language of culture. The ability to speak it is recognized both as an accomplishment of culture and a necessity of commerce. The old idea of making Latin the dialect of learning is now shut up to the universities. The later fashion, of making French the dialect of courts, is also yielding ground. In many German cities English is spoken in every other store one enters. Ask for a hat in broken German, and the chance is, that you will be asked in return, in a dialect as pure as yours, "Can you speak English?"

Commerce and colonization have effected such an extension of the use of this language, that an English traveler, not long ago, starting from Liverpool, and following the sun, traveled on a belt around the globe, and never

was for twenty-four hours on land out of hearing of his native tongue, spoken by natives of the countries he visited. Dilke's "Greater Britain" is well worth reading for the conception it gives one of the steadiness and the grandeur with which English speech is marching over the habitable world. It is more sublime than the tramp of an army. Mr. Webster gave expression to a profound fact, prophetic of this world's destiny, when he represented the globe as surrounded with one "continuous and unbroken strain of the martial airs of England."

Once more: English is the language pre-eminently of Christian missions. Not only is the Christian religion now going to the nations from English sources chiefly, and supported chiefly by auxiliary institutions of English origin, but it is more and more largely going in English forms of speech. The nations which speak English are the great missionary nations, as they are the colonizing nations. In their missions, as in their colonies, they carry their national tongue with them. The question is already discussed among our American missionaries, whether an error in missionary policy has not been committed in some localities by trying to work Christianity into effete and expiring dialects, instead of laying the foundations of a Christian education in an English culture. Many parts of the ruder Pagan world are already dotted over with Christian schools in which only English text-books are employed. It is a fair question, and, so far as I know, yet an open one, whether it pays for its cost in time and money and missionary life, to build up Christian institutions in savage dialects whose limited and often degraded vocabulary renders it difficult to put into them even the elementary ideas of our religion.

A recent American traveler, sympathizing, as Sir Charles Dilke does not, with the work of missions, after making the circuit of the globe, visiting missionary stations all the way, does not hesitate to take the negative of this question, so far as the purely savage tongues are concerned. He writes: "Let those who conduct the missionary operations of the day study this question of language. Instead of wasting time and strength, and money and lives, in making written languages out of the dialects of savages, begin at once with the English. A half-century of effort well directed will sweep from the earth hundreds of dialects, specially in Africa and the islands of the Pacific." I understand his idea to be, that we should depend on oral teaching till a foothold is gained, but put all Christian books into English forms, and build at length a Christian education upon those, leaving the savage dialects to die out gradually, as they will when brought into competition with a tongue like our own. For the Christianizing of barbarous tribes, this policy may be the true one. The fruit of it may be, that at no very distant day English will supplant many such tribal dialects. Some of our missionary books now extant in those dialects may become an antiquarian curiosity, like Eliot's Indian Bible, which now only one living man, if one, can read. Surely, if possible, it seems desirable that such melancholy monuments of toil and zeal, and, it may be, the fidelity of invalids to a life's work, all so soon to pass into oblivion, should not be multiplied.

LECTURE V.

PURITY OF STYLE; REASONS FOR ITS CULTIVATION, CONCLUDED. — MEANS OF ITS ACQUISITION.

WHAT is the drift of the reflections presented in the last Lecture upon the probable destiny of the English language, as it regards the main subject before us? It may be condensed into a few emphatic particulars.

One is, that this is clearly destined to be a *living* language for an incalculable period of time. A human speech possessed of such intense vitality, and freighted with such materials of knowledge as those of the Christian religion and the civilization which it nurtures, may never die. Another fact is, that this is such a language as Christianity always uses for its own advancement. The Christian religion has always disclosed an affinity for the youth and the manhood of languages rather than for their periods of decadence. It abandons the dying for the nascent literatures. More than once it has passed out from aged to youthful nations, from decaying to germinant races, and, therefore, from effete into living dialects. By all the teachings of its history, it should seem to be established that the English tongue is to be the great instrument of its future and of its final triumph.

This view is confirmed by another fact, — that it is the way of Divine Providence to ordain elect languages to great services in the work of this world's redemption. As there are elect nations, races, families, individuals,

and types of civilization, so there are elect languages. Selection and decree of choice things to great ends run through Providence as through Nature. Thus choice languages are appointed to execute divine purposes of exceptional magnitude. The call of Abraham was not more potently the voice of God than was the creation of the Greek tongue. The election of the Hebrews to be conservators of revealed truth was not more obvious than the decree now is which ordained the Latin tongue to a work of its own in the early stages of Christianity. Our English tongue is one of these elect languages, and the latest in the line, as it appears, of Christian civilization. The Greek language in the golden age of Athens did not compass so grand a destiny.

From this view, then, it follows that our language ought to be guarded from degeneracy. As scholars and as public teachers, the ministers of religion should handle it as a sacred trust. Dante says that the first duty of a poet is to guard the purity of his native tongue with jealous care. If this be true of the Italian tongue, how much more significantly true of the English! And, if true of a poet's duty, how much more sacredly true of that of a Christian preacher! We should revere our language as a trust direct from the hands of God. It is worse than boorish to abuse the laws, and distort the structure, of such a language in public speech. To a refined and scholarly conscience it is a moral wrong thus to misuse an instrument which God so manifestly ordains to great uses. We speak of "sacred languages." We revere the very words in which inspired thought has been revealed. But why should one of the chosen dialects of revelation be more revered than a chosen dialect of Christian civilization and redemption? It is precisely in accord with our work as Christian preachers

to act as conservators of the graces and the forces of such a tongue. To do this we must possess and must keep in constant use a respect for its purity among the cultivated classes of those who use it. Of these no other is equal in literary influence to the public speakers of a republic.

6. A sixth reason for cultivating the use of pure English by American speakers and writers is, that the language is in special danger of corruption in this country. The danger arises from several causes, which can be but briefly noticed here.

One is, that republican institutions favor the influence of the illiterate upon the language. Our people are intelligent, yet in the main illiterate. Republicanism creates a multitude of illiterate speakers. It tends, also, to promote the use of the language in address to the illiterate. As a nation we have no such knowledge as that which extensive reading gives, and no such delicacy of ear for the sounds of the language as the people of Athens had in their better days. Popular influence on the use of the language, therefore, is powerful, and at the same time not subject to good taste. Public speakers of all classes are tempted to speak for sensational effect. Members of the American Senate illustrate the force of this temptation in the prejudice which some of them have expressed, in words quite equal to the dignity of the sentiment, against "literary fellers" among their associates. The late Hon. Stephen A. Douglas once declared it to be a disqualification for the duties of senator, that a man had a classical education.

The power of this prejudice is seen in the very structure of our standard English lexicons. Their scholarly editors dare not shut out wholly from them words which

have no possible use or authority but those of low life. The lexicons are swollen to such size, that one needs a porter to carry them; and yet each new edition adds thousands of words, many of which are useless, and words of which the less the people know, the better. It would be a service to the national civilization if they could not be found in any dictionary. Yet publishers, in the competition of trade, dare not exclude them. It will never do that one book should contain five thousand words more than its rival. That they are branded with scholarly objections, such as "rare," "not used," "low," "obsolete," etc., amounts to little. The corruptions are there. The people see them in the standards of the language, and seeing is believing. The record itself is a triumph of barbarism over learning and taste.

Again: the extent of our territory favors the formation of provincial dialects. I have spoken of the dialects in the different shires of England. In France the same thing abounds. The peasantry of different departments find it difficult to understand each other. Yet France has a territory not so large as Texas, of not much more than one-half the size of Nebraska. Herodotus tells us, that the dialects of ancient Greece often could not be intelligibly interchanged by those who used them. Yet Greece comprised a landed area less than that of one-half of the State of Pennsylvania. What shall prevent the growth of provincial tongues in a territory measured by thousands of miles from sea to sea, divided by such lines of demarkation as the Rocky Mountains, and embracing every variety of climate and production within the temperate zone?

To illustrate what is actually going on on the Pacific coast, let me instance that which is called the "Chinook dialect" in Oregon. A few years ago that dia

lect was in full play as an infant language by itself. It was originally compounded by members and employees of the Hudson's Bay Company to facilitate trade with the Indians. A dictionary of it has been printed, containing about twelve hundred words made up of English, French, and German, with a sprinkling of Indian words. Of forty tribes of Indians, no two use the same language; but they all understand "Chinook."

Further: the multitude of nations represented in the emigration to this country also fosters the growth of dialects. The Dutch settlers in Eastern New York were from the first hemmed in by strong English populations; yet they have left an impression on the colloquial language of that region which lives to this day, and this after the lapse of two hundred years. In some inland villages not far from the Hudson the mixture of Dutch and English words is obvious. It is not long since persons were found there who spoke Dutch alone, yet were natives of the Empire State. In Oneida County, a few years ago, you might have traveled for miles, and heard only the Welsh language.

If a few Dutch and Welsh immigrants could give to their languages such vitality in the midst of a thickly settled English State, what must be the effect produced by the thousands of Germans, Swedes, Norwegians, in the north-western States? These have newspapers in their native tongues, and schools in which those tongues are used. Sometimes even the laws of the State have to be printed in a foreign language. In the city of Chicago the gospel is preached in eight different dialects to-day.

The intermixture of races in this country is beyond all precedent in the history of mankind. A correspondent in a Californian periodical says that marriages occur

there "between Yankees and Digger Indians, Irish and Chinese, Mexican and Malay, Portuguese and Sandwich Islanders, Canadian and negro, French and Apache, to say nothing of the more common intermarriages to be seen in all parts of America." He adds, "The way the English language must suffer in the mouths of the descendants of these oddly-coupled people will be without parallel. Even now the more familiar Spanish terms have become ingrafted on our English, so that they never can be detached again. Words from every language on the earth are working in, from Chinese to Kanaka." A shoemaker in San Francisco was asked by a customer, "Can you speak English?" and he replied unhesitatingly, "Si Signor, certainement! you bet!" There were three languages in one sentence; and the good man straightened himself up with a look of proud satisfaction at the thought that he could speak English like a native. He was an Italian.

The effect of this condition of things must subject our language to a very severe process of transition, in which dialects will be almost inevitable. The danger is, that the language will be seriously weakened for the high purposes it has served hitherto, and which have resulted in the noblest body of literature in the world.

Good taste, however, does not favor any quixotic enterprise. Changes can not be wholly prevented. It is not desirable that they should be. But it is desirable and practicable to guard the old English of scholars and public speakers from reckless change, from ignorant change, from change fostered by the indolence of authors and the coarseness of readers. Keep the old English literature within the homely language of the people, as it is now, by keeping the language substantially what it is now. Do not allow such a magnificent

literature to become obsolete through the obsolescence of the tongue in which it is now treasured. Think of it! Shall an American a hundred years hence be unable to read "The Pilgrim's Progress" in the *original?* Shall an American child then need a glossary to decipher the present form of "The Lord's Prayer," as we do to read the translation of it by Wickliffe? It would be a catastrophe to all high culture and to Christianity itself. Yet any language will die out thus, if authors and speakers leave it unguarded to drift with illiterate and vulgar usage. They are its natural conservators.

7. One reason for cultivating a pure English style remains to be considered briefly, which is of special interest to clergymen. It is, that the clergy of a country have great influence over the tastes and usages of the people. The pastor of a parish, if he is an educated man, becomes often the standard of culture to his people, unless he forfeits the prerogative by presenting an unworthy standard in his own person. This is specially true in rural parishes. One pastor I have known who was for twenty years the standard of appeal in matters of literary taste in the city of Boston. His use of the English language was never questioned. Scholarly lawyers, physicians, and men of leisure, deferred to him as an oracle. Coleridge says, that, "if the history of phrases in hourly currency among English peasants were traced, a person not previously aware of the fact would be surprised at finding so large a number which three or four centuries ago were the exclusive property of the schools, and at the commencement of the Reformation had been *transferred from the school to the pulpit*, and *thus* gradually passed into common life."

A clergyman should never forget this prerogative of his position. An incidental duty of the clerical office

is to elevate the people in their use of their mother-tongue. Refine a people's daily speech, and you refine their daily thoughts. Men of letters in other departments of life complain of our profession in this respect, and with some reason. They say that we are tolerant of cant, that we encourage the inroad of barbarisms, that we coin poor English, that we use needless technicalities, that we import into sermons the slang of newsboys. In all this we sacrifice athletic English to a dialect as unbecoming to the pulpit as it is unnecessary to the expression of any thought which deserves utterance in the pulpit. Those of the clergy are justly condemned who do not in other respects show themselves the friends of education. Common schools, colleges, professional seminaries, look to our profession for their most efficient founders and conductors. They have a right to do so. Ministers of the Christian religion are, *ex officio*, auxiliaries of schools of learning. We teach a religion of thought. Why have we not a corresponding duty to the culture of the country, respecting that cause and sign of high culture which consists in a pure use of the English tongue? A thoroughly faithful pastor will not be negligent of such incidental duties and prerogatives of his calling.

I have said that we teach a religion of thought. A very significant fact, looking in the same direction, is, that we teach the religion of a *Book*, and that that Book in our English version is rhetorically one of the purest in the language. It has done more than all the rest of our literature combined to make the language what it is, and to send a rich and strong and sweet current of pure English through the dialect of all the English-speaking nations. We can not be true to the literary spirit of the Bible, nor congenial in the influ

ence of our ministrations with its literary influence on the world, if we do not preach in the language of lofty English scholarship. Dr. Henry More says, that "a man of good parts, by constant reading of the Bible, will naturally form a more winning and commanding rhetoric than those that are learned; the intermixture of tongues and of artificial phrases debasing *their* style." Fidelity to the Book, then, which has created the Christian pulpit, should render the style of the pulpit a model of pure, national English.

8. The eighth and last reason to be observed for cultivating a pure style is, that the taste for such a style is indispensable to thorough and refined scholarship. Observe critically the character of educated men, and you will find that their genuine culture in other things is proportioned to their taste for good English in their public speech. The accuracy of a man's learning, the soundness of his philosophy, the trustworthiness of his literary judgments, the value of his opinions of books, of educational enterprises and expedients, and the general symmetry of his culture, may be graded by his taste for pure English in his own use of language. The study of this quality of speech lies deeper in the ground-work of culture than at the first view it appears to do. Its roots run into and under the foundation of scholarship. This is the chief reason why so large a space is given here to its discussion. It is not because purity of style is immediately and intrinsically more important than other qualities, but that it lies at the basis of them all.

VI. The only remaining topic in the discussion of the theme before us is the inquiry, What are the most effective means of acquiring a pure style? These relate to several things.

1. One of these is our habitual conversation. We

should distinguish between colloquial usage and that of continuous discourse. Conversation tolerates a freedom which is not authorized in discourse, written or oral. Colloquial usage admits provincialisms, contractions, even imports from other tongues, more freely than the usage of public speech or of authorship. For instance, a scholarly spirit does not recoil at hearing, in the freedom of conversation, such contractions as "don't," "can't," "won't." But, when Daniel Webster used them in the United-States Senate, he violated the canons of cultivated taste. He did not do it in the earlier and more vigorous years of his life. His style in this, and in some other respects, deteriorated. We often say of a man's written style, that it needs more of the colloquial elements. That criticism commonly refers, not to vocabulary, but to construction, and specially to the ease and flexibility of structure which conversation creates more readily than written discourse.

But it is not fastidious criticism to subject even conversation to substantially the same rules respecting a pure vocabulary by which we form the diction of discourse. Use pure English in common talk. This is not "talking like a book." It is using in speech the best elements of the language, — the best for clearness, for force, for elegance. Observe for yourself the conversation of the best class of educated men: you will detect an indefinable charm in it, which is due almost wholly to its selection of pure words, the predominance of Saxon words, the avoidance of slang, of contractions, of vulgarisms, of pedantic importations. The colloquial style of Edward Everett by the hour together might have been transferred to print without an omission or a correction. So might that of Washington Irving. One reason why they wrote as they did, in pure classic Eng-

lish, was that they talked in pure classic English. The habit of the tongue became the habit of the pen.

An educated man should never translate educated speech into slang facetiously. A man's jests may be a cause, as well as a sign, of literary decline. The majority of men of culture would be surprised to discover how much of such facetiousness exists among them, and how insidious its influence is on refinement both of thought and speech. Some conversationalists seem to know no other way of giving mother-wit to their talk than that of translating pure English into the dialect of low life. The apology for it is, that it is so expressive. But so is profaneness expressive. Vulgarity in all forms is expressive. You can command entranced attention in the pulpit by the utterance of an oath. But neither is a necessity to the bold and manly purposes of conversation. The princes in colloquial expression employ a vocabulary of which the most fastidious scholar need not be ashamed. The most forcible elements of common talk are its purest elements.

The habit of ignoring those elements in favor of their vulgar equivalents is degrading to a man's habits of thinking. It fills his mind with coarse expressions of energy; and, in the haste of dignified speech, these will crowd their way in, to the displacement of those refined forms which a scholar's taste prefers, and the superiority of which every man feels. Such forms of vulgar force, once rooted in a speaker's vocabulary, may not die out of it in a lifetime. De Quincey, for instance, must first have allowed his colloquial dialect to be corrupted, before he could, with his princely command of language, have indulged himself in writing, as he does, of Greece as having been very proud of having "licked" her enemy "into almighty smash;" and again, of Apollo

dorus as being "cock of the walk." An author's pen does not commit such crimes against the mother-tongue if his own tongue has not first been guilty of degrading colloquial liberty into colloquial vulgarity.

2. A pure style may be fostered by the reading of classic English authors. The most lasting influence which forms a speaker's style is commonly that of the authors of whom he is most fond. The influence is a silent one, and its growth imperceptible; but it is creative. That which an educated man reads with most profound reverence and enjoyment he will most nearly resemble in the end. Delight in pure English, and you will compose in pure English. Let your tastes be formed upon the models of Addison, Dugald Stewart, David Hume, Wordsworth, Macaulay, Whately, Washington Irving, Edward Everett, Motley, and Prescott, and you can scarcely fail to write and speak with a pure vocabulary.

On the other hand, read with scholarly caution authors who by reputation are indifferent to the purity of their language. Do not accept as authorities Coleridge, Carlyle, Emerson. Read with critical care against abuses of language those authors whose culture has been chiefly derived from German literature. I am unable to assign a reason for it; but it is a fact, that German writers, when they become the favorites of an American speaker, are more efficient in corrupting his English style than those of any other foreign tongue. This, probably, was the chief source of the degeneracy of Carlyle's English. It is reported that when he began his literary career, before German studies had become ascendant in his reading, he wrote a diction not at all noticeable for unscholarly features. The degradation of his style to the most monstrous contortions that have

defaced any modern literature of equal rank seems to have been consciously and voluntarily invited on his part, by the sacrifice of his English to his German masters.

3. Purity of style may be assisted in its growth by a discreet use of dictionaries, grammars, and other treatises upon language. As I have before remarked, an educated man should, if possible, own both the unabridged English dictionaries which belong to American literature. Webster's Dictionary is a nearly perfect authority for the signification of words. Some words found there have attached to them a thesaurus of information about their varieties of meaning and the idioms in which they occur. Examine, for example, the word "get" in that dictionary. The study of such dictionaries, even when one can not accept them as decisive of the right of a word to *be* in the language, is still valuable in forming one's taste, and assisting one's independent judgment. Robert Hall never wrote for the press without keeping Johnson's Dictionary open before him for reference. Yet he might have been pardoned, if any man might, for writing recklessly; for he probably never had a painless waking hour in his life after reaching the age of manhood. He lived and died in extreme neuralgic suffering. If Carlyle had been such a sufferer as Hall was, one might pardon his style for howling and growling in outlandish English.

Grammars, also, men of culture neglect too commonly. De Quincey writes, "We blush to say, that, through a circle of prodigious reading, we have never known a writer who did not sometimes violate the accidence or syntax of the English language." A professor in one of our colleges once expressed the opinion, that not one educated man in ten can invariably use correctly

the English subjunctive mood. There is much elementary knowledge of language which even a collegiate training by no means makes sure in a man's culture.

Of other treatises on language than dictionaries and grammars, the following are among the most valuable: Bartlett's "Dictionary of Americanisms," Trench's treatise on "The Study of Words," Latham's "Treatise on the English Language," Marsh's "Lectures on the English Language," Grant White's "Words and their Uses," Max Müller's work on "The Comparative Philology of the Indo-European Languages," "Language, and the Study of Language," by Professor Whitney, and Whately's "Synonyms." A few such volumes, for one who is engaged in an arduous profession, are better than many.

4. Purity of style may obviously be cultivated by a scholarly care in one's own habits of composing. Never use a doubtful word without investigation. Generally give the preference to Saxon words. A Saxon style is almost certain to be a pure style. Criticise your own composition after the excitement of the work is over. By directing your own attention consciously to the barbarisms already familiar to your pen, you most easily expel them from your use. Write also with the assistance of a manuscript catalogue of words which you detect as impure or doubtful English in your reading. For convenience' sake, such a list of words should include also those which are violations of precision, to avoid the necessity of constructing two. Words obsolete, words obsolescent, words doubtful, words whose structure or sense should not invite their introduction to the language, words not precise as commonly employed, unauthorized compounds, words improperly imported, — these and similar violations of good style may

be accumulated as a ready guide to one's own critical taste. Knowing what to shun is the chief thing in learning what to use. The very writing of such a catalogue will of itself improve one's critical taste. It is also the most effective method of keeping one's self informed of the progress of the language.

LECTURE VI.

PRECISION OF STYLE. — DEFINITION. — VIOLATIONS.

PRECISION of style — what is its characteristic idea? This is figuratively suggested by its etymology, — *præcido*. To eliminate redundancies, to supply deficiencies, and to remove inaccuracies, is its aim. Precision, then, is the synonym of exactness. More fully, it is that quality by which a writer's style expresses no more, no less, and no other, than the thought which he means to express.

I. Precision needs to be distinguished from certain other qualities which it resembles. It is distinct from *propriety* of style. Propriety, as we have seen, relates to the signification of language as fixed by usage: precision relates to the signification of language as demanded by the thought to be expressed. Propriety is satisfied if we write good English: precision demands such a choice of good English as shall express our meaning.

Precision is distinct, also, from *perspicuity* of style. Precision, as above remarked, is satisfied if we express in good English our thought, no more, no less, no other. Perspicuity requires such a selection of good English as shall make our thought clear to the hearer. The thought may be precisely expressed, yet not be understood by the hearer. It may be clothed in unfamiliar English, yet with no want of precision. You may soliloquize your thought exactly: you do not thereby

communicate it clearly. Perspicuity demands an adjustment of style to the capacity and culture of an audience; precision, only an adjustment of it to the thought of the speaker. Profound thinkers are not necessarily expert communicators. Style, then, may be precise, and not perspicuous: it may be perspicuous, and not precise. Connection may neutralize the want of precision. It may be clear that a speaker means what he does not say. One may not always easily determine at what point the want of precision passes over into a want of perspicuity. That depends on the quality of the hearing.

To recapitulate these distinctions: propriety requires only good English; precision requires such a choice of good English as shall express the speaker's mind; perspicuity requires such a choice of good English as shall make the speaker's mind clear to the hearer.

II. As professional speakers, we need a discussion of precision of style, chiefly for the sake of observing its most important *violations*. What are they?

1. One class of offenses against precision concerns the use or omission of single words. The wrong use or omission of a word sometimes affects grammatical construction, to the injury of this quality. "Certainly I nor any man has a right," etc.: thus writes De Quincey. Ungrammatical structure here is occasioned by the omission of the word "neither." "No writer was ever guilty of so much false and absurd criticism:" thus writes Macaulay of Sir Horace Walpole. The omission of the word "other" impairs precision. If no writer was ever thus guilty, then Walpole was not guilty. But Macaulay means to say the opposite. Scores of instances of this offense against precision are found in Macaulay's writings. A model of precision as he is in other respects,

he seems never to have observed the nice requirement of our syntax in this.

The word "it" is often so used or omitted as to injure exactness of expression. William Cobbett says, "Never put an 'it' on paper without thinking what you are about." Often the thing needs to be expressed to which the impersonal pronoun refers. Sometimes the demonstratives "this" or "that" need to be substituted for "it." Your reading, if your attention is directed to the fact, will disclose to you the enormous amount of material which this word is made to carry in the usage of authors. The freedom of its use exposes it to abuse. The possessive case of "it" is of recent origin in the language. Our English translators of the Bible did not recognize it. They employed "his" for "its." The impersonal form of the possessive does not occur except by interpolation. It was not common in King James's day.

A wrong choice of single words leads often to the loss of precision in the moods and tenses of verbs. "I intended to go," "I had intended to go," "I intended to have gone" — these forms express different shades of thought; yet some writers use them interchangeably. De Quincey writes: "With the exception of Wordsworth, no celebrated writer of this day has written a hundred pages consecutively without some flagrant impropriety of grammar, such as the eternal confusion of the preterite with the past participle, confusion of verbs transitive with verbs intransitive, or some violation more or less of the vernacular idiom." This is an extravagant criticism, but it indicates the general impression left by a voluminous range of reading upon one of the keenest of modern critics.

One of the permanent questions of literary criticism

.s when to use the subjunctive mood. A very difficult question it is, except to a writer whose habit of critical observation has been disciplined by extensive reading of the best authors. Mr. Hallam says that the use of misplaced inflections was one of the chief things in which the decadence of both the Greek and the Latin languages first showed itself. Teachers of the freedmen of our own country find the similar defect one of the most difficult things to correct in the negro dialect. In that dialect it often extends to the connection of different verbs utterly without sense, as in the phrase "done gone." A singular power is observable, in such corruptions, to migrate from one language to another, apparently through the national blood. Mr. Livingstone found, in some of the African dialects, phrases corresponding to this "done gone" in the *patois* of the Southern plantation.

The instinct of literary taste is seldom, if ever, sufficient to guide a writer in the use of the verbal moods and tenses. We need elaborate study of them with grammar in hand, and also a large range of good reading behind to determine points which grammars do not specifically treat. Think on these topics with the pen; write down errors and their corrections, and fix thus in mind the underlying philosophy of grammar. I know of no less elaborate method by which one can become an accomplished scholar in English idioms. The majority of the graduates of American colleges understand the Latin and Greek languages more philosophically than they do the English. The study of our own tongue as the subject of philosophical analysis is a modern addition to our collegiate curriculum. How many professors of English literature without special training are qualified thus to teach it? One expedient

which facilitates the study of it is to study the English verb in comparison with the Greek verb.

This suggests, further, that the wrong use or omission of *connective* words is often the occasion of looseness of style. The superior precision of the Greek tongue is said, by those who are experts in teaching it, to be in part due to the abundance of connectives in its vocabulary. For some of its connective particles our language has no equivalents; yet such as we have serve often to knit one's style together in exact and forcible collocations. Coleridge says that a master of our language may be known by his skillful use of connectives. This is one secret of the vigor of Coleridge's own style. His prolonged and involuted sentences derive from this source often a wonderful continuity, without which his profound conceptions could not find adequate expression. In order to represent some thoughts, style needs a certain sweep of sustained expression, like the sailing of an eagle on wings of scarcely visible vibration. Such, often, is Coleridge's style; and his command of it is often due to his precise use of connective words. It is still more abundantly and grandly illustrated in the prose style of Milton. Hence arises the independence of both of fragmentary expression such as the majority of writers would think to be all that some thoughts admit of in human speech. Hence their freedom from that which Southey calls the "Anglo-Gallican style, whose cementless periods are understood beforehand, they are so free from all the connections of logic." Dr. Arnold, speaking of this feature in the thinking of Coleridge, says that he would have been more perfectly understood if he had written in classic Greek.

This which I have termed the "involuted style" is essential to the loftiest flights of eloquence in oral

address. No man can be supremely eloquent in lacon ics. You can not express the rising and the expanding and the sweep, and the circling of eloquent thought borne up on eloquent feeling, in a style resembling that which seamen call "a chopping sea." For such thinking, you must have at command a style of which an oceanic ground-swell, or the Gothic interweaving of forest-trees, is the more becoming symbol. You must have long sentences, involved sentences, magnificent sentences, euphonious sentences, sentences which invite a rotund and lofty delivery. This diction is often censured by critics as "fine writing." But you must have such a style for the most exact utterance of certain elevated and impassioned thoughts. The pulpit can not afford to ridicule or ignore it. Yet, in the construction of such a style, you must use connective words, — links elaborately forged, inserted in the right joints of style, to make them flexible without loss of compactness. One word of such exact connective force in the right place, with the right surroundings before and after, may make all the difference between a disjointed and a linked style.

2. Another class of offenses against precision concerns the literal and the figurative uses of the same words. The style of oral address naturally multiplies the figurative uses of words. There is something in the correspondence of *eyes* between a speaker and his hearers, which prompts the use of pictorial language with a freedom not so natural to the style of books. The magnetism of vision invites a speaker to paint his thought to the waiting and eager eyes before him. Good hearers are always good spectators. No man hears perfectly with his eyes shut.

The connection, whether in oral or written address,

does not always determine which of the two uses of a word, the literal and the figurative, an author means. What, for instance, does Aristotle mean when he speaks of a "perfect thief"? — a sinless thief, on the principle of Spartan ethics, which made the wrong of theft consist in its detection? or a thief perfectly trained in the arts of his trade? What does a celebrated English physician mean, when he describes a "beautiful ulcer"?

Excessive figure in style obviously exposes it to a loss of precision. The style of some writers is a winged chariot: it bears up every thing into the air, soaring on a figurative vocabulary. A reader often doubts how much is figurative, and how much literal. Something must be literal in any sensible style. Good sense must have literal expression: it must often be pedestrian. What is the literal conception is often the vexed question. The style of Ruskin abounds with illustrations of this. I turn at random to one of his pages, and find a description of the flowing of a brook in summer: "Cressed brook, lifted, even in flood, scarcely over its stepping-stones, but through all sweet summer keeping tremulous music with harp-strings of dark water among the silver fingering of the pebbles." A precise reader, accustomed to look for exact ideas, will read this a second time, and perhaps not even then discern its meaning.

A notable example of a want of precision in theological style, occasioned by the confounding of literal and figurative phraseology, is found in many discussions of human ability and dependence. Theological science respecting those two doctrines hinges primarily, not on a theological, but on a rhetorical distinction. All evangelical theologians believe both those doctrines. But they do not stultify themselves by believing both in the

same senses of the words employed. The controversy turns on the inquiry which of the two crucial terms is figurative, and which is literal. The believer of one school affirms that "ability" and its synonyms are the literal words, and that "inability" and its equivalents are figurative words, meaning a disinclination which insures wrong action and sinful character. The believer of another school declares that "dependence" and its equivalents are the literal terms, and that "ability" and its synonyms are figurative terms, signifying only the possession of certain constitutional faculties, which are not powers, therefore not capable of use in right action resulting in upright character.

Has not the fact arrested your attention, that these two opposing classes of terms are often employed in theological discussion with an unbounded license as it respects their literal and their figurative senses? They are now literal, then figurative, and then literal again. Some disputants agree as little with themselves as with each other. Their own definitions do not bind them. This is one cause of the dubiousness of many essays on the will.

3. Another class of offenses against precision of style consists of synonyms confounded. The composite structure of our language has multiplied synonyms immensely. The two great branches of the language, the Saxon and the Norman, have specially wrought this result. To illustrate the extent to which these heterogeneous elements have accumulated synonyms, let a single example be given, which I take, in part, from Mr. Trench. We have the words "trick," "device," "finesse," "artifice," "ruse," "stratagem," "maneuver," "wile," "intrigue," "fraud,"—at least ten words to express a group of ideas all having a common center

These words are contributions from five different stocks of language. "Trick" and "wile" are Saxon; "device" and "intrigue" are Italian; "finesse," "maneuver," "ruse," and "intrigue" also, are French; "artifice" and "fraud" are Latin; and "stratagem" is Greek. We have more than thirty words to express different varieties of the single passion of anger. It is obvious at a glance, that, in this multitude of synonyms, our language presents great facilities for looseness of diction.

Some writers are deceived by the similarity in the orthography of certain words. Such words as "ingenuous" and "ingenious," "guile" and "guilt," "fictitious" and "factitious," "genius" and "genus," "human" and humane," "depreciate" and "deprecate," "extenuate" and "attenuate," "subtle" and "subtile," "imperative" and "imperious," "healthy" and "healthful," "impassable" and "impassible," "conjúre" and "cónjure," are often confounded. A storekeeper gives notice in his window, "Umbrellas recovered here." What does he mean?—"recovered" or "re-covered"? The two words "healthy" and "healthful" are so frequently interchanged, that our dictionaries define them, in part, as if they were exact synonyms; which they are not. The best usage of authors expresses by one of them the state of health, and by the other the act of producing health. "Healthy" is "not diseased:" "healthful" is "tending to promote health." The physician implied precise English, when, to the inquiry whether oysters were "healthy" at certain seasons, he replied, "I have never heard one complain of an ache or an ail." The distinction between these two words is parallel to that of a large group of words in our vocabulary, by which we distinguish between a condition, and a tendency to

produce it. A man advertises the patent for a proprietary medicine for sale, and observes, "It can be made very profitable to the *undertaker*." Here the confounding of the general with the technical meanings of the last word, through sameness of orthography, gives a very dubious commendation to the drug.

The use and neglect of the etymology of words are often the occasion of a loss of precision. "Sympathy" and "pity" are confounded by neglect of etymology. Συν-παθος, the root of the word "sympathy," indicates a much finer feeling than that of pity. On the other hand, more often still, adherence to the etymological sense of a word, when that sense has become obsolete, impairs precision.

Command of the etymological senses of words is a rare gift, often as valuable as it is rare. Sometimes the etymological idea in a word is so remote from its real meaning, that the use of it amounts to an original figure, as when Mr. Choate, in speaking of a disappointed candidate for office, said, "The convention *ejaculated* him out of the window." This latent force, which always lies in the etymology of words, tempts writers of classic training to resort to it, to the loss of precision. Thus Bishop Lowth writes, "The Emperor Julian very *judiciously* planned the overthrow of Christianity." Paley speaks of the "judiciousness of God." Guizot writes of the "duplicity" of certain of Shakspeare's plays, meaning only their dual structure. Bancroft writes of the "versatility" of the English Government, meaning its fickleness. Alison writes of the cavalry on the retreat from Moscow, as "leading their extenuated horses by the bridle:" he means "attenuated." De Quincey speaks of "chastity," meaning "chasteness," "of taste." He speaks also of a "licentious" style, when he means a style rhetorically loose.

In all these cases, even in Alison's use of the word "extenuated," the obsolete etymological significations are recalled, and allowed to displace the later usage. If a writer so keen of eye as De Quincey can commit this error, more feeble or less practiced writers must be in constant peril of saying what they do not mean. No other quality of a good style demands such incessant care as this of precision. One's mind must be wide-awake, and always awake, in its choice of vocabulary. My reading leads me to distrust sweeping commendations of authors in this respect. I distrust the man who claims absolute precision of style. No writer within my range of reading can substantiate the claim.

4. Not single words only may impair precision, but it is often sacrificed by defect respecting the number of words employed. Two forms of error in this respect lie opposite to each other.

One is the sacrifice of precision through excess of conciseness. In the manufacture of bullets, one part of the process is that of compressing the bulk of the metal without lessening its weight. By this means is gained increase of momentum in the discharge. This is a pertinent emblem of genuine conciseness in style. Only that is true conciseness which compacts thought without loss to the exactness of its expression. Precision is impaired if words are not numerous enough to express the whole thought.

Writers who affect conciseness inevitably commit this error. Ralph Waldo Emerson is often guilty of it, through the affectation of laconic style. Dr. South is not always free from it. The different degrees of comparison are often expressed with deficiency of words. "As many and even more hearers were assembled than before." What is the defect here? The writer should

have said, by some reconstruction, "As many as, and even more than," etc. The inflections of verbs, also, are often put into excessively concise forms. "Men always have and always will reject the doctrine of fatalism." What is the error? The form should have been, "Men always have rejected, and always will reject," etc. The late Rev. Dr. Sears, writing of a certain rule in German grammar, says, "If this rule were established in all languages, this subject would be attended with fewer difficulties than it actually is." He should have said, "than it actually is attended with."

Some errors of this class arise from hopeless blundering. Says an editor, who still survives the achievement, "Chaffee's majority was thirteen hundred and ninety-two, — just one hundred less than Christopher Columbus discovered America." A bridge in Denver, a few years ago, contained this record of municipal law: "No vehicle drawn by more than one horse is allowed to cross this bridge in opposite directions at the same time.' The civil code of California once contained this statute "All marriages of white persons and negroes and mulattoes are illegal and void." Who were, then, the legally married people of California? None but the Indians and Chinese. Such errors, or their equals in blundering expression, will occur in every writer's first thoughts of construction in composing, and will be paralleled in his written style if he trusts implicitly to first thoughts. They suggest a good general rule, that we should not shrink from repetition of words if that is necessary to precision. The elegance of a precise style is often disclosed where the precision is gained by repetition. Macaulay's writings abound with illustrations.

Precision may be sacrificed, not only by excessive conciseness, but by its opposite, — a redundance in the

number of words. Writers — and, still more, speakers — are exposed to this error, who have at command a diffuse vocabulary. A voluminous vocabulary by no means insures a full expression. One to whom thought comes in a volume of words may express more, he may express less, he may express other, than his real meaning. He to whom words occur with difficulty is the more apt to have a studied expression, and therefore an exact expression.

Looseness from redundance is specially apt to occur in speaking on difficult themes to the popular mind. Under such conditions, one is apt to explain, to qualify, to repeat, to speak in circumlocutory phrase, to experiment with variations. These easily overwhelm the thought with words. One then loses precision in the effort to be perspicuous. Style moves aslant and askew in the struggle to move at all. Sometimes the very struggle to be precise — the mind, in the very act of composing, being intent on precision — may defeat itself. Here, again, thought is overborne by the machinery employed to give it utterance. Writers who pride themselves on philosophical accuracy are apt to multiply qualifications, and circumstantial incidents, and secondary clauses, and parenthetical inclosures, so that no possible error shall be affirmed; but that very strain after accuracy defeats its aim through the mere expansion of bulk and involution of connections. When a dozen words might have been understood, a dozen dozen may fall dead on the ear.

Edmund Burke sometimes illustrates this. In one of his elaborated sentences you will sometimes find words and clauses selected and multiplied and arranged and compacted and qualified and defined and repeated, for the very purpose of extending and limiting the truth

to its exact and undoubted measure. He obviously labors to say just what he means, no more, no less, no other. Still, on the whole, he fails, because he is so elaborately precise in details. The thought is suffocated by the multitude of words employed to give it life. It is buried alive. To change the figure, you can divide and subdivide a field into so many, so small, so regular, and so exact patches, that the chief impression it shall leave on your eye is that of the fences. Similar is the impression of an excessively precise style.

Such a style is peculiarly inapt to oral delivery. That which gives a dim idea to the reader may give none to the hearer. A style which must be critically analyzed to discover its contents has no chance in the rapidity of oral speech. Beginning, it may be, with a defect in precision, it ends with a defect in perspicuity.

5. Precision may be sacrificed further by looseness of *construction*. This class of errors runs parallel to a similar class, which we shall have occasion to consider in the study of perspicuity of style. The difference between the two is only a difference of degree. The same peculiarity of construction which in one degree of it is an example of looseness, in a greater degree becomes an example of obscurity. To avoid repetition, therefore, I defer illustrations of these offenses till we are led to recall it in our discussion of the corresponding class, on the subject of perspicuity.

LECTURE VII.

THE CAUSES OF THE FORMATION OF A LOOSE STYLE.

THE violations of precision in style which we have considered, we may assume to be of such significance as to give importance to a third general inquiry, to which we now proceed; viz., what are the chief causes of a loose style?

1. Of these, the first and chief is the habit of indiscriminate thinking. Other causes will give way to time if this one be entirely removed. Let a speaker habitually think with exactness, and a precise style will be at last inevitable. The power will grow to meet the demand of the thinking mind. Such is the subjective relation of language to thought, that the mental force which originates exact thinking will at length command exact expression.

This leads me to remark that some authors and speakers are rather prolific than precise. Mental force often expends itself in abundance rather than exactness of production. The diction of such writers will probably be what their thinking is. Indeed, all active minds are rather affluent than precise at a certain stage of their culture. Luxuriance of production precedes exact thinking in the order of time. Precision in either thought or expression belongs to the manhood of culture, not to its infancy. Furthermore: the want of precise thinking may characterize any mind, at any stage of

culture, on some subjects. There is a growth of subjects, as well as a growth of mind. We all have to go through the chaotic stage of growth in our study of new themes. We must make allowance for this, and not look for precision of style till we have such mastery of a subject as shall give us precision of thought.

It is worthy of note, also, that some men never advance habitually beyond the chaotic stage of culture in their mastery of subjects. They are, therefore, never precise writers. Never mastering any thing to the full, they can never say any thing to the purpose, beyond commonplaces. I have in mind a preacher of some celebrity, who had great enthusiasm and some originality; but he never was an exact thinker, therefore never a precise writer, on any thing. In controversy he was always worsted, because he could never write in that masterly style which is the token of masterly thinking. He could not speak his mind precisely, because he had no mind precisely. Ruskin contends for a similar principle to the one before us, in the kindred art of painting. He says, "Without absolute grasp of the whole subject, there is no good painting. Partial conception is no conception."

Coleridge lets us into the secret of much which is called study, and is not such, when, in a letter to Wordsworth, he complains that he loses so much of his time in "leaning back in his chair, and looking up to the ceiling, in the bodily act of contracting the muscles of the brows and the forehead, and unconsciously attending to the sensation." If the secrets of ministerial studies could be known, we should probably find a great deal of such thinking, — the thinking of an idle mind. The style of some preachers gives token of it. It is a magic mirror, in which is reflected the interior of their

libraries. We see the sluggish figure, the head thrown back, the wrinkled eyebrows, the vacant stare, the languid fingers when they take the pen.

Be it remembered, then, that the foundation of precision, as of all other qualities of masterly discourse, lies in one's habits of thinking; not in one's thoughts on a given subject alone, but in one's mental habits. Style, like character, is the mirror of habits. The thing needed is that, which, in painting, Ruskin calls the "power of mental grasp." This, he says, "implies strange and sublime qualities of mind." It is a power which must be elaborately gained, — gained by thinking on difficult themes, by cultivating mastery of such themes, till they become the easy and natural subjects of one's daily meditations, and the joy of one's mental life.

2. A second cause of the formation of a loose style is the indulgence of excessive care for expression as distinct from thought. A writer is often anxious, not so much to say somewhat as to say it somehow. Most of the faults of a juvenile style result from this cause. Diffuseness, repetition, bombast, result inevitably from the study of expression as distinct from thought. The temptation is constant to abandon the precise word, known to be the precise word, felt to be the only precise word, and to go roving for a substitute which may have every quality but the necessary one of saying what is meant. Watch the growth of an emphatic sentence in your own mind. Do you never find your tentative efforts to frame it following the lead of a favorite turn of expression, which is not the lead of your thought? Have you never chosen a word which you were conscious did not, so well as another, express your meaning, yet chosen it because it was a novel word, or an odd word, or a strong word, or a euphonious word, or an

archaic word? Yet that is mannerism in style. It is not honest work.

The most offensive variety of the error in question arises from a morbid fancy for some one quality of style, which leads a speaker to be constantly on the strain. One affects the beautiful; another, the forcible; a third, the pathetic; a fourth, the rhythmic. Each manufactures his favorite diction, with little care for the demands of sentiment. A critic is tempted to sum up his comments on such a style in the old axiom of grammar, that "words are the signs of ideas." Often this form of the defect becomes a servile imitation. An illustrious author who has a marked individuality in his style is very apt to have a crowd of imitators. That which is original to him is copy to them. Their own individuality is sacrificed to his. Imitation is less difficult than creation. The extreme of the evil is, that the copyist not only does not obey the bidding of his own thought, but he obeys as little the thought of his model. He copies the idiosyncrasy of the style of his model. The work is all patchwork, put on from outside: it gives no chance for the outgrowth of thought from within. It is like a seashell inclosing the body of a bird.

In this way, at one period arose a "Chalmerian" style, and again a "Johnsonian" style, and another, which one critic has labeled as "Carlylese." The Scottish pulpit for one entire generation, as I have elsewhere remarked, suffered this tyranny of the style of Dr. Chalmers. The despotism of Dr. Johnson's style in literature, which probably he himself unconsciously received from Sir Thomas Browne, was perhaps the most powerful that English literature has known in its whole history. A writer who falls into servitude to his model lives a disguised life, till he outlives disguise, and

is content to be himself, and not another. His style, till then, is a manufacture of lies, yet of lies which are sure to be detected. Concealment of the infirmity is impossible. Long before he has found himself out, his style blabs it to every discerning critic.

Even so manly a man as Robert Hall confesses to having fallen in his early life into subjection to the Johnsonian dialect. His criticism of himself illustrates with what scorn a robust mind will fling off such a mask as soon as it discovers that there is a mask. He says of himself, "I aped Johnson, I preached Johnson. It was a youthful folly, a very great folly. I might as well have attempted to dance a hornpipe in the dress of Gog and Magog. My puny thoughts could not sustain the load of words in which I tried to clothe them."

The first lesson to be learned by a young writer, yet often the last that is learned, is, that expression is to thought what countenance is to character. The one can not exist without the other. Thought is the fixture: expression should be fluid in its capacity to adapt itself to the configuration of the thought. Hugh Miller gives a hint of the truth in his criticism of the poet Cowper. He says, "Cowper possessed, above all other modern poets, the power of bending the most stubborn and intractable words in the language around his thinking, so as to fit its every indentation and irregularity of outline, as a ship-carpenter adjusts the planking, grown flexible in his hand, to the exact mold of his vessel."

3. Precision often suffers from another cause, which is not peculiar to this quality, but affects others as well. It is the want of a command of language. This may result either from natural defect, or from the want of studious practice in the use of the language. A speaker

can not express his thought if he can not command the requisite vocabulary.

EXCURSUS.

Let the inquiry be here considered as an *excursus:* How can the want of a command of language be remedied? The inquiry is pertinent to all the qualities of a good style, though especially so to the one before us. In the first place, be it observed with emphasis, that command of language is not attainable by the mere accumulation of words in a ready memory. Vocabulary alone may stifle thought. A true command of language consists in a command of the forces of expression which the language carries. With emphasis, it is a *command* of language. It consists in the power of selection and rejection, rather than in that of accumulation. It is the power to use and to lay the spirits, as well as to summon them. Command of words, and command of the linguistic forces, are by no means one thing. Words come in troops at the bidding of one man: they fall into rank at the bidding of another.

These two varieties of power are illustrated in the styles of Daniel Webster and Rufus Choate. Both were powerful speakers; but Webster was the superior, because of his superior power of selection. Much as one is dazzled by Choate's marvelous command of vocabulary, still one can not avoid thinking of his style in the reading. That always indicates a defect. An absolutely perfect style attracts no attention to itself. Criticism of it is an after-thought. Members of the Boston bar all alike yielded to the spell of Choate's rhetoric; yet, in the very act of admiring, they found leisure to note that he "drove the substantive and six," alluding to the multitude of adjectives which he hai-

nessed to a noun. Men with tears coursing down their cheeks, in listening to his sonorous periods in his eulogy upon Webster yet slily made a memorandum that they would count the words in some of those periods when they should be printed, and afterwards remarked, that one of them was the longest but one in the English language. Who ever heard of any such arithmetical criticism of Webster's reply to Gen. Hayne of South Carolina? When Choate spoke, men said, "What a marvelous style! How beautiful! how grand! how immense his vocabulary! how intricate his combinations! how adroit his sway over the mother-tongue!" When Webster spoke, men said, "He will gain his case." Webster's vocabulary was much more limited than that of Choate, but he had a much sterner power of selection and rejection. His command of language was like Darwin's law of species in the struggle for existence, — only that lived which deserved to live.

The most effective, indeed, the only effective means of obtaining command of the forces of expression which the language contains, is the persistent union of a critical study of the language with its critical use. Language needs to be searched. Words need to be weighed. Then use must make them familiar and ready to the pen or tongue. In oral delivery, words vary in their momentum. We need to graduate their movement by unconscious thought which shall guide selection to the purpose. A speaker makes a great acquisition when he adds to his practicable vocabulary one new word of which he has entire mastery. Mastery of a word means more than is commonly understood by it: it includes knowledge of all the shades of thought which good use attaches to the definition of a word. Look at Noah Webster's definitions of standard words. Are you never

surprised, as by a discovery, at the secondary senses of a word which you thought you knew by heart? Do we not all know something of the experience of which Mr. Maurice speaks, when he says that "a light flashes out of a word sometimes which frightens one. If it is a common word . . . one wonders how one has dared to use it so frequently and so carelessly, when there were such meanings hidden in it."

Command of a word implies also knowledge of its synonyms. Words have a science corresponding to that of comparative anatomy. No man knows a word all around, till he knows in what and why it is superior, or not so, to its synonyms. Such knowledge includes, further, perception of the forces of a word in varieties of connection. The life of a word, like that of a tree, is seldom in one tap-root, so that it always signifies the same thing, and carries the same weight, and gives to thought the same momentum in oral speech. It commonly has fibers, by which connection modifies force. Look at the idiomatic phrases in our language, of which the word "come" is the center, — "come at," "come to," "come short," "come off," "come by." See Webster's Dictionary.

Mastery of a word involves, also, knowledge of its possible figurative uses; not only of those which dictionaries define, but of other forces which a writer may originate by a figurative combination. The heavy preponderance of the weights of language is in the scale of its figurative senses. Analogies connect all words with all words. By means of figurative speech, all departments of thought illumine each other. Originality in style appears chiefly in the discovery of analogies, and fitting them to use. Who but DeQuincey, for instance, would ever have discovered the analogies of thought,

which enabled him to describe in a breath the style of Dr. Johnson by calling it the "plethoric tympany of style"? Yet all language is veined by such analogies, in which every writer may range at will.

Once more: mastery of language includes a retentive control of a vocabulary and of varieties of English construction, by which they shall always be at hand for unconscious use. Do we not often fret for the right word, which is just outside of the closed door of memory? We know that there is such a word; we know that it is precisely the word we want; no other can fill its place; we saw it mentally a short half-hour ago: but we beat the air for it now. The power we crave is the power to store words within reach, and hold them in mental reserve till they are wanted, and then to summon them by the unconscious vibration of a thought. Nothing can give it to us but study and use of the language in long-continued and critical practice. It is the slow fruitage of a growing mind.

Walter Scott, for instance, saunters through the streets of Edinburgh, and overhears a word, which, in its colloquial connections, expresses a shade of thought which is novel to him. He pauses, and makes a note of it, and walks on, pondering it, till it has made a nest for itself in his brain; and at length that word re-appears in one of the most graphic scenes in the "Fortunes of Nigel."

Dr. Chalmers is summoned at midnight to minister to a Highland woman on her death-bed. She has no practical notion of faith in Christ. He tries to explain it, but she gets no idea of his meaning. He endeavors to simplify it. He reverts to the Westminster Catechism, which she knows by heart; he falls back upon biblical phrases: it is all in vain. Under the overshadowing

dread of death she finds nothing in her inherited conceptions of the way of salvation which gives her peace. At length he remembers to have been himself impressed by the force of a word in the provincial dialect of his youth, and he resolves to try that with the despairing woman. He says, "Just *lippen* to the Lord Jesus." Now he has got hold of a thing she understands: she grasps his thought in the twinkling of an eye. The mystery of justification by faith, which her mind has droned over in catechism and sermon for threescore years, opens to her vision like the gates of heaven.

Washington Irving relates, that he was once riding with Thomas Moore in Paris, when the hackney-coach went suddenly into a rut, out of which it came with such a jolt as to send their heads bumping against the roof. "By Jove, I've got it!" cried Moore, clapping his hands with great glee. "Got what?" said Irving. "Why," said the poet, "that *word* which I've been hunting for for six weeks to complete my last song. That rascally driver has jolted it out of me."

The late Hon. Caleb Cushing of Massachusetts spent the larger part of his mature life as a member of legislative bodies. For years he was the Mentor of the Massachusetts Legislature at a time when his politics put him always in a minority on any political measure. Yet he saved the State from much unconstitutional legislation by his power of command over the English language. It has been said that no suit at law is known to have been brought into court by any lawyer, in which the success of the suit depended on proving to be unconstitutional or defective any statute of which Caleb Cushing had the control in the committee which framed it. He was able to say, and to assist legislators to say, so exactly what was meant, that no clear-headed advocate

could misunderstand the statute, or find a flaw in it by which to sustain a lawsuit. The explanation of that rare power of his, of precise utterance, as given by those who knew him best, is, that he read and conversed in half a dozen languages, and made language the study of his life. In the convention for the settlement of the "Alabama Claims" he was the only man who could converse intelligibly with all the members of the convention in their several vernaculars.

These examples from real life all point one way. They illustrate the value of studies of language in any department of public life. By such studies, when combined with scholarly use of language in a laborious profession, a man masters words singly, words in combination, words in varieties of sense, words in figurative uses, and those forces of expression which always lie latent in original uses of one's mother-tongue. No such command of a word is ever permanently lost.

Let it be further observed, though the fact be hackneyed, that such command of language as a public speaker needs is assisted by a range of reading of standard literature which shall be as various as it can be, and yet be the reading of a scholar. Illustrious authors have always something original in their uses of language. New words, new constructions, new significations, or figurative uses of words, are found in their diction, by which they have enriched the resources of public speech. Standard literature is a treasury of linguistic varieties from which orators may draw at will. Sometimes distinctions are brought to light which have been latent in the language till a certain author has called attention to them, like that which Wordsworth exhumed between "fancy" and "imagination," or that which Coleridge claimed between "reason" and "understanding." Al

most every great mind adds, to the resources of the language which it employs as its vehicle of thought, something a knowledge of which will instruct and refine an orator's taste.

Such writers as Edmund Burke, Coleridge, Isaac Taylor, and, going farther back, Jeremy Taylor, Milton, and Sir Thomas Browne, by simply compelling language into the service of original and intense thinking, develop new power in the language to express thought. Passionate, imaginative thinking, like that of the old poets, illuminates language by the very heat and glow of the material it is made to carry. The literary work of such minds is a work of pure invention. In the arts it would be rewarded by a patent. As a thing of *use* to a public speaker, the language is the more valuable for having been thus *used* by his predecessors, if he has a scholarly knowledge of their work. Reading, therefore, which covers as broad a range of literature as critical reading can cover, is a necessary adjunct to a speaker's studies. Rufus Choate writes in his diary, "I have long been in the habit of reading daily some first-class English author, chiefly for the *copia verborum*, to avoid sinking into cheap and bald fluency, to give elevation, dignity, sonorousness, and refinement to my vocabulary." This hint discloses to us one of the sources of his magnificent and superabundant diction.

Before closing this *excursus* on command of language, let two facts be named for the encouragement of young writers and speakers. One is, that a genuine command of language is an acquisition, never a gift. There is a certain leakage of words, which popular slang defines as "the gift of the gab," which may be a gift, but is no sign of control over one's mother-tongue, but the reverse

rather. That control is an acquisition by the ablest as by the most feeble writers. We read the writings of De Quincey with a discouraging admiration of his marvelous uses of English. Whatever other excellence he has not, he certainly has this, of the power to summon and put to use a large and forcible vocabulary. The exuberance of his style is excessive. The growth is rank. Yet he tells us that in early life he labored under a "peculiar penury of words." He regarded the infirmity of his mind in that respect as extreme. It gave him, he says, "a distinguished talent for silence." What young preacher does not know the experience of that "distinguished talent for silence"? De Quincey's acquired power of utterance is finely illustrated in his subsequent description of his early reticence. He says, "I labored like a Sibyl instinct with prophetic woe, as often as I found myself dealing with any topic in which the understanding combined with deep feelings to suggest mixed and tangled thoughts." He adds, that Wordsworth also suffered in early manhood from the same cause. In both cases, doubtless, the ultimate affluence of style was an acquisition. It was a laborious acquisition. It grew hardily and thriftily, as an oak does, out of the very toughness of the native soil.

Such examples should assure us that language will obey our bidding, to an extent sufficient for forceful speech, if we command it by the authority of thoughts which deserve expression, and a study of language which shall discover the means of expression. We can say what we mean if we have a meaning that is worth the saying. We have only to put our whole souls into the saying. Every man can grow to the extreme of his literary aspirations.

The other fact to be remembered for our encouragement is, that the vocabulary which is necessary to effective speech is much less voluminous than is often supposed. Our language, it is estimated, contains about one hundred and twenty-five thousand words; yet, of this immense number, it is surprising how few are in common use. The majority even of educated men, it is believed by careful critics, not only do not use more than one-tenth of them, but would not recognize more than that as having been met with in their reading. The obsolete and obsolescent words, the vulgarisms, the provincialisms, the terms technical to the arts and the professions, the imports from other languages, the words of recent coinage which have not acquired naturalization in the language, and the words which a public speaker would not employ twice in a lifetime, probably comprise by far the larger part of Webster's Dictionary.

I have seen it stated on scholarly authority, that a child does not commonly use more than a hundred words; and, unless he belongs to a cultivated family, he will never habitually employ more than three or four hundred. An eminent American scholar estimates that few practiced writers or speakers use as many as ten thousand words in threescore years of public life. Speakers employ not so many, by a large count, as writers employ. Max Müller says, that "a well educated person who has been at a public school in England and at an English university, who reads his Bible and Shakspeare, and all the books in Mudie's Library, that is, nineteen-twentieths of all the books published in England, seldom uses more than three or four thousand words in actual conversation." Eloquent speakers, he thinks, may rise to a command of ten thousand.

"Even Milton," writes another critic, — "Milton, whose wealth of words seems amazing, and whom Dr. Johnson charges with using a Babylonish dialect, uses only about eight thousand; and Shakspeare 'the myriad-minded,' only fifteen thousand." The Old Testament contains less by some hundreds than six thousand words. These facts go to show that a scholarly mastery of an English vocabulary, large and varied enough for forcible public speech such as the themes of the pulpit require, ought not to be looked upon with awe, as an impossible or very difficult achievement.

4. Returning, now, from the *excursus* upon the topic of command of language, let us pass to consider a fourth cause of the formation of a loose style; which is an uncritical admiration for loose writers. We err through our involuntary tastes more seriously than through our literary judgment. Every young man passes through a period of his growth in which his tastes predispose him to yield homage to some writers, and not to others. He feels unaccountable attractions, like that of the hazel-rod for the subterranean spring. That secret affinity may give an author, or a small group of authors kindred to each other, a power of control over the early drift of his culture. If such authors are loose in their use of the language, he may receive influences unfriendly to his style from which he may never recover. Coming upon a fascinating volume by chance may give a turn to his whole life. Dr. Franklin was controlled thus, as he thought, by a single volume by De Foe, read when Franklin was a young man. Sir Joshua Reynolds writes, that his tastes were swayed in a similar manner by a treatise of Richardson's.

Great importance is clearly to be attached to such

early favorites of a young man when his style is forming. If he does not form a taste for scholarly precision then, he is not likely ever to form it. A certain peculiarity of shadow, it is said by critics of art, is perceptible in all the paintings of Rembrandt. Experts have attributed it to the fact that his father's mill, in which his early studies of his art were practiced, received its light through an aperture in the roof. So it is in the kindred art of literary composition. A very insignificant fascination by a very inferior author may give to a young man's style a monotone which shall last through a lifetime. Precision especially is one of those products of scholarly taste which is not apt to attract a man for the first time in middle life or old age. Youth must plant it, or it will not flourish in mature age.

5. A loose style sometimes results from an indiscriminate dependence on dictionaries of the language. I have before said, that our standard dictionaries are not, and do not profess to be, absolute authorities respecting purity of diction. Neither are they such respecting precision. A public speaker needs a culture of taste and a range of reading which shall enable him to sit in judgment on the dictionaries, and, if need be, to dissent from them with a reason. For example, one dictionary gives a definition to a certain word for which the only authority given is President Polk. In another appears a signification attached to a word on the authority of "Mr. Smith." There is a dictionary in England compiled by that unfortunate man, but who knows him? Who ever heard elsewhere of President Polk as a literary authority? He had scarcely the average culture of a Tennessee planter. So long as dictionaries defer to such authorities, they can not be trusted for a scholar's use of the language, without supervision and censor

ship by that fine perception of the forces of words which is the fruit of choice yet extensive reading. If you write or speak with the license of using any word in any sense which President Polk has coined, or which "Mr. Smith" commends in any dictionary, your style must degenerate below the average intelligence of American assemblies.

6. One cause of the formation of a loose style remains to be named with brief remark: it is a disproportioned amount of extemporaneous speech as compared with the products of the pen. Extemporizing promotes fluency of speech: the pen promotes precision. For the most perfect results in the character of a preacher's style, in my judgment, these two methods of sermonizing should be practiced with as near an approach as possible to equality of amount. This medium is rarely gained. Defects respecting both methods are usually the two extremes. Preachers are prone either to extemporize always, or to write always.

A high standard of extemporaneous preaching will often drive a man to his pen for relief. This was illustrated in the experience of Dr. Chalmers. In his early attempts to acquire extemporaneous fluency he failed; because his standard was, for him at that period, impracticably high. He could not be content without expressing in extemporaneous diction all that he could express with the pen. When, in the excitement of speaking, thought began to crowd his utterance, he began to hesitate, merely because his thought so immensely overflowed and swamped his utterance. He compared his extemporaneous efforts to a bottle filled with water, and suddenly turned upside down. The contents, he said, were ejected "with jerks, and large explosions, and sudden stops." The bottle was choked

by its own fullness. Such a delivery of his thought so disgusted and disheartened him, that he thought it a hopeless failure; and, after repeated trials, he fell back upon his pen as a relief. With pen in hand, he could say what he meant: without it, he said any thing else than what he meant. His mistake was that of crowding his extemporaneous culture up to a perfect ideal at the outset. He allowed it no time to grow by natural and easy increments.

But a moderately high ideal of extemporaneous speech is an admirable check on the extreme of extemporaneous fluency. Our American ideal is not the highest. In the pulpit, especially, we have but little of the elaborate, the elevated, the senatorial style of extemporaneous expression. The tendency of such as we have, if it is not overruled by a due proportion of written sermonizing, is to the extreme of diffuseness; and a diffuse style is never a precise style. Did you ever see a rank and top-heavy growth of clover just after a thunder-storm? Such is apt to be the style of a preacher who always extemporizes. The gushing enthusiasm of extemporaneous delivery is apt to *cast* the style in inextricable confusion.

LECTURE VIII.

THE INDUCEMENTS TO THE CULTIVATION OF PRECISION OF STYLE BY A PUBLIC SPEAKER.

THE only branch of the subject before us which remains to be considered is the inquiry, Why should a speaker to a promiscuous assembly be scrupulous to cultivate a precise style? Scarcely any other quality of speech has been made the object of so much impatient and sarcastic criticism as this of precision. Men associate it with insipidity.

Quintilian said of a certain author, and it has been repeated of scores of others, for it is the keenest remark that Quintilian ever made, "that his greatest excellence was, that he had no faults; and his greatest fault, that he had no excellences." This is often nearly the popular idea of a precise style. Preciseness in manners is ranked as its twin-brother. Robust men are not charmed with prigs in oral speech any more than in morals. It is instructive to observe the complacency with which some educated men will express contempt for the class of studies which that of precision represents. I once inquired of a celebrated preacher what principles he followed in regulating his own style, and he answered, "I have but two. One is, have something to say; and the other, say it." A truth was contained in the aphorism, but by no means all the truth, or the best of it. It would be as apt a reply if an architect, when asked on what rules of architecture he constructed a cathedral,

had said, "I have had but two: one was to get the job, and the other, to execute it."

Robert Southey says, with scarcely more discernment of the merits of the question, "I have but three rules of composition, — to write as clearly as I can, to write as concisely as I can, and to write as impressively as I can." "As clearly as I can" — was the study of precision useless to that? "As concisely as I can" — had precision no concern with that? "As impressively as I can" — could precision give no aid to that? Southey's neglect of critical study of language had its natural effect on his own style. He is distinguished as a voluminous rather than a powerful author. He would have doubled the duration of his influence on English literature if he had published less, and elaborated more. Ralph Waldo Emerson dismisses his name with a sneer, — "Who is Southey?"

1. In opposition to such unscholarly neglect of the study of those elements in style which precision represents, let it be remarked, first, that this study does not necessitate in the result the acquisition of any thing pedantic or unpractical. You do not become a mere word-hunter by hunting words. The fact remains unanswered, that the most powerful masters of English speech are those who have studied the resources of the language most critically. The ablest thinkers are they who can put thought into its most exact expression. Those who are most successful in making style the servitor of thought are they who have most thoroughly weighed words. Such authors and speakers command the words they need, and use no more and no other. They are free from the entire class of literary defects which arise from the tyranny of expression over thought.

2. Precision and the study of it are essential to certain other qualities of a good style; for instance, they assist clearness of style. A preacher, especially, who must deal with difficult themes, and in oral address, and to the popular mind, will often find, that if he would be understood, if he would not be misunderstood, he must say exactly what he means. He must put into language intelligible to the common mind his ultimate thoughts on the subject in hand. Not a word too many, not a word too few, not an ill-chosen word, not a misplaced word, not a word untruthful in its connections, not a figurative word which can be mistaken in a literal sense, not a word exaggerating the shade of his thought — such must his style be if he would express himself at all, on a certain theme, to a promiscuous audience. It has been said of Adam Smith, that no man needs to read a sentence of his a second time. Such must the general style of the pulpit be if some of its fundamental subjects are to be discussed at all before some hearers. Yet those are the very subjects on which the despotism of words over thought is most common, and most difficult to avoid.

Precision and the study of it also promote energy of style. The most intense energy often depends on precision. There is an energy which is created by a voluminous vocabulary, but the supreme energy in speech is from a well-chosen vocabulary. Force of style is specially intensified by the compression which precision tends to secure. Take an example, almost at random, from John Foster: "The rude faculty which is not expanded into intelligence may be sharpened into cunning." How otherwise could so forcible an expression be given to his thought in a literal form? He adds a figurative form of the same idea: "The spirit which

can not grow into an eagle may take the form and action of a snake."

This last example illustrates, also, a fact often overlooked in the criticism of the quality before us, — that it is not at all restricted to literal speech. There is a precision of figure which is the most intense type of energy. It is a paradox to speak of figurative language as precise. But it may be so through the intensity of the impression it makes. The outline of a thing may be most exact to the eye when it is on fire. So a thought difficult of conception to the common mind may be made clear by being made vivid; and that may require that it be intensified by a metaphor. Certain theological truths are more exact to the popular mind in the biblical figurative form of them than they can be made by philosophic statement. All truths are so, in the expression of which vividness is essential to precision.

How could you define lightning to a man who never saw it? Witness the struggles of blind men to conceive of colors. When one said, "The color of scarlet is *like* the sound of a trumpet," he illustrated the struggle of the mind to conceive and express an impossible thought by the aid of a simile. Like that is the aid of figure to the precision of all difficult thought. Hyperbole may assist precision, even when it falsifies fact. Said John Randolph, when seeking to provoke a duel with Henry Clay, "A hyperbole for meanness is an ellipsis for Clay." Though false to fact, it was not so to the real meaning of the speaker. He meant all that he said; and the reason for his unconscious choice of figurative style was, that in no other way could he approximate the whole of his meaning. We miss the breadth of significance in the term "precision," when we restrict it

to the exactness of a philosophical definition and a mathematical demonstration.

Again: precision promotes elegance of style. This it does by promoting the fitness of style to sentiment. Our sense of beauty depends largely on our sense of fitness. This we feel, not in words only, but in construction as well. What is the defect in the following specimen? A church which was burnt in Saco, Me., was thus discoursed upon by a rural editor: "The church was erected during the ministry of the Rev. Elihu Whitcomb; and the dedication sermon was preached Feb. 12, 1806. *It* was ninety feet in length and fifty-four in breadth." We detect in this no want of purity, the words are good English; no want of energy, the style is as forcible as the thought is, and no style should be more; no want of perspicuity, for it is clear that the writer meant what he did not say: no reader can mistake the sense. The defect is a want of precision of construction. No writer would be guilty of it who was accustomed to study precision as a tribute to elegance.

Further: precision is the most effective test of affected style as distinct from genuine style. In affected style, expression is estranged from thought. Apply the test of precision, and the mask drops. In a certain treatise on political economy may be found this declaration: "As much food as a man can buy for as much wages as a man can get for as much work as a man can do, ought to satisfy every citizen of the state." A profound principle of political science appears here to be expressed in pithy, condensed, forcible diction. A world of axiomatic wisdom seems to be packed into this monosyllabic sentence. Probably the writer himself believed, certainly meant that his readers should believe, that this was a marvel of laconic force.

Now analyze it by the inquiry, What, exactly, does it mean? Reverse the order of the thoughts, for the sake of clearing it of its deceptive axiomatic forms, and it reads thus: "A good citizen will first do as much work as he can do; for his work he will ask as much wages as he can get; and then he will spend it all on food, and be content." He may not possess a hat, or a shoe, or a coat, or a book. Yet he has done his whole duty to the state; and the state, its duty to him. Even with largest allowance for latent and understood ideas, it amounts only to this: that a man should be content with the best he can do and the best he can get. What concern has this with the elements of political economy? It reminds one of another notable example of economic wisdom, in which the author advanced as an elementary principle of population which Malthus had never discovered, "that a large town densely peopled must commonly support a greater number of inhabitants than a small place sparsely settled, especially if it be in the rural districts." Apply to any form of affectation in style the query, "What precisely does the writer mean?" and the glamour of affected excellence disappears.

3. Precision is not only auxiliary to other qualities of a good style, but it has an independent virtue of its own. This is not easily defined, yet we all feel it. We respond approvingly to a precise style, not merely because it is a perspicuous style, not merely because it is a vigorous style, not merely because it is a becoming style. We approve it for its own sake. That is a keen mind which *can* say what it means, and all that it means; and we respect a keen mind. That is an honest mind which *does* say all that it means; and we trust an honest mind. That is often a bold mind which does not *fear* to say all that it means; and men are attracted

always by the bold virtues. "He says what he means" is often the highest encomium which the popular verdict gives to a public speaker.

We often think of precision as one of the peculiarly scholarly virtues. It is that; but the popular mind is passionately fond of it as well. A common audience often makes a blunt demand for it in an extreme. They silently crowd upon a speaker the mandate: "Say what you think; out with it!" Nothing wearies them more quickly than a style which beats about the bush. They never read diplomatic papers. One reason for the popular simile, "as dull as a sermon," is, that sermons are so often written in a style indicative of self-restraint, — a style which a certain critic has described as one in which "words spend their time in dodging things."

This popular craving for a blunt precision is often illustrated in the epithets by which the popular taste expresses its notion of illustrious men. Royal characters have sometimes passed into history labeled with one word, which portrays the exact popular conception of them. I say "portrays," because the word is commonly one which makes appeal to the eye; and it lives long after the labored analysis of the historian is forgotten. Thus we read of "Charles the Bald," and of "Louis the Fat," and of "Charles the Simple," and of "Pepin the Short," and of "Louis the Pious," and of "Charles the Stammerer." In these single and often insipid titles the individuality of these men has been more exactly indicated than by the historians of courts. Adulatory description and magniloquent phrase have been brushed aside by the popular verdict. The popular voice has said what it meant, and has meant what was true. It is as if the subjects of the kingdoms had

said to the historian, "Away with make-beliefs! Put down just this of these men, — it is what we know of them, and all that we know, — 'He was bald,' 'he was fat,' 'he was simple,' 'he stammered,' 'he was short:' so let it stand!" And so it is that these men have come down to posterity.

I have said that the popular craving for exact utterance of truth is often excessive. Men crave a coarse precision, a savage form of truth. Yet it is the truth, after all. The common mind will not long retain a label of a distinguished contemporary if it is not true. Popular slang, in such cases, though etymologically loose, is commonly definite to the popular ear, and substantially exact. No language is more so. Thus, when a prince has proved himself bold, quick, decisive, ponderous in character, the popular voice has summed up its verdict in one figurative but exact title, "Charles the Hammer." When a military chief has proved himself sanguinary, cruel, ferocious, relentless, the people have told the whole story of his life in the single phrase, "Alva the Butcher."

The watchwords of political parties again illustrate the same thing. These are often intensely figurative; yet, if they have great force with the people, they are as intensely true. No style can express the truth with more of that vividness which is often necessary to precise ideas in the popular mind. Gen. Harrison owed his elevation to the presidency of our republic, in large measure, to his supposed sympathy with the simple and rude usages of backwoodsmen; and this was expressed in the old war-cry of the Whigs of 1840: "Log Cabin and Hard Cider." Gen. Taylor owed his election to the same office largely to the sobriquet which his soldiers gave him in the Mexican war, "Old Rough and

Ready." Gen. Scott was believed to have lost his election because of the nickname by which his enemies ridiculed his well-known fondness for military etiquette, "Old Fuss and Feathers." Thousands of voters who cared nothing, and knew nothing, about the policies of the contending parties, knew as definitely as you do what those watchwords meant; and they voted for and against the things which those words painted to their mental vision. A style in which men said what they meant, and meant what they believed, carried the day, although it was made up of popular slang.

4. It should be further remarked, that precision of language is specially needed in many varieties of religious discourse. No other department of thought has suffered so much from indefinite language as that of religious controversy. We have before observed certain single words which in theological discussion have been the victims of loose usage. Let us observe now one or two examples of theological definition in which the same defect appears. One would suppose, that, in the very act of defining a thing, definite and self-consistent diction would be employed. If a writer can not express his meaning in exact definition, it is fair to presume that he can never be depended on for exact discussion.

Yet a writer in the "Princeton Repertory" advances the following definition of the character of an act: "The character of an act consists in the disposition and the purpose and the motives with which it is performed." On any theory of the nature of virtue, what has the word "motives" to do with the definition of character? What is a motive? Surely it is either something within, or something without, the man himself. If something within, it is synonymous with either

disposition, or purpose, or both, and it confuses a definition to add it to either. If something without, it is no part of his character in the act. Is the purse of gold a part of the character of the thief who steals it? Another critic, in the "Biblical Repository," writes thus, in the attempt to define inability: "Natural inability is that which an agent, though ever so willing, can not do from lack of capacity." Inability, then, is not an attribute of the man: it is the thing which he can not do. This is nonsense.

A certain theological author starts with a proof-text, and builds upon it a theory of depravity. "There is no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus." On this text he lays down the following theses: (1) If there is no condemnation to them, they are not guilty, that is, not exposed to the divine wrath; (2) If they are not guilty, then they are innocent; (3) If they are innocent, then they are holy; (4) If they are holy, then they are perfect; that is, perfect not in nature, but in their persons. "I can not see," he modestly adds, "how it can be otherwise."

Surely enough: it is a hopeless case. Who can see it to be otherwise, or anywise, with such a piece of pure mechanism as this, of words void of thought? First, the word "guilty," used in the old scholastic sense of "exposed to divine wrath," which was never the common sense, starts the logic on a false track. Secondly, the confounding of "innocence" with "holiness" prolongs the absurdity. The two words are not synonyms: one is negative, the other positive virtue. Gabriel is holy: an oriole is innocent. Thirdly, what unheard-of fiction of theological fancy can he be dreaming of, when he separates "person" from "nature," pronouncing one perfect, and the other not? When the princely bishop

swore at his butler, what became of the bishop when Satan got the prince? Some men have owed their partial loss of reputation for orthodoxy to an inability to use a few theological terms with precision. Horne Tooke, when on trial for high treason, said that he "was the miserable victim of two prepositions and a conjunction." Similar are the triangular tormentors which have vexed the souls of some theologians.

Is there any thing within the range of human character which Shakspeare did not illustrate, either in earnest or in caricature? He has the forerunner of such theologians as these in the person of Bardolph, expounding the word "accommodated." "Accommodation — that is — when a man is — as they say — accommodated: or when a man is — being — whereby — he may be thought to be — accommodated — which is an excellent thing."

EXCURSUS.

In closing this discussion of precision of style, let us observe, by *excursus* from the main topic, a certain tendency to decline in the popular dialect in the expression of religious ideas. The tendency is always present, in the popular thinking, to confound those ideas. The gravitation is downward, from the more to the less exact. The unity of God once established, as it must have been in the infancy of nations, could never have been lost from the popular faith but for this intellectual degeneracy. The modern pulpit has the same drift to contend with, though in other forms. Terms once understood do not live, unless the pulpit constantly puts life into them by being itself alive with them. First a careless use, then a confused use, then contradictory uses, and finally false use of language, mark the process,

often, from popular faith to popular disbelief. In rude ages this was a descent from monotheism to idolatry.

Have you not observed this tendency to confusion, in its middle stage, in the dialect which laymen often employ to express religious experience? The indeterminateness of their dialect is significant of moral decline. By instinct they shun a positive utterance. The peculiarities of Christian experience, as distinct from natural religiosity, are dropped from their speech. They talk of goodness, not of piety; of virtue, not of holiness; of belief, not of faith; of improvement, not of conversion; of weakness, not of guilt; of faults, errors, irregularities, not of sin, crime, vice. They trust in heaven, not in God; or in Divine mercy, not in the blood of Christ. They hope for the immortality of the soul, not for union of the soul with Christ. The good *man*, not the redeemed and believing *sinner*, is a symbol in their thought of an upright character here on earth; and the hope of immortality is the utmost stretch of their aspiration for eternity. One can not find evidence in their religious dialect, that they have ever heard of the New Testament.

The dying words of statesmen and literary men often betray this loss of every thing that is peculiar to Christianity as distinct from the Socratic philosophy. If they allude to Christianity in their dying testimony to their faith, they often seem, by their language, to mean by it a power of civilization, not a plan of individual redemption and salvation. Look for examples to the dying declarations of Daniel Webster and Henry Clay. From the death-scene of one of our American senators one can not infer that he knew even of the being of a God.

This degeneracy of religious dialect is very apt to

take place in a certain circle of minds which seem to roam around the spiritual life of the Christian Church, without being participants of its privileges, or believers in its reality. They are not spiritually converted to Christ, yet are unable to rid themselves of the Christian civilization. By a centripetal force, Christianity holds under restraint from downright philosophic heathenism multitudes who never give evidence of an experience of its saving power. Their religious dialect corresponds to the fact. Such minds are held in check, but are not swayed; they are illumined, but not warmed, by the vital truths of the religion they profess to believe. Among this large class of mental satellites of Christianity you find the dialect which expresses the peculiarities of the life with God in Christ to be an unknown tongue. Members of the House of Lords used to go to hear the preaching of William Jay, and return, saying that they could not understand him. He spoke of things of which they found not the remotest conception in their own mental history. Between him and them a great gulf lay. And this because he preached to spiritual Christians of the peculiarities of the Christian life.

To arrest this degeneracy of nominally Christian minds, and put them upon an ascending track of Christian thought, a preacher needs to be master of a precise religious style. The temptation, when seconded by the amenities and the culture of the social life which Christianity creates, is almost overwhelming to yield to the moral decadence of the secular mind, and permit Christianity to decline to the level of philosophic morality. Preachers who do not consciously intend this may be drawn into it insensibly. They gradually become reluctant to employ the distinctive language of Christian experience, because it is the language of so much illiterate

experience. They unconsciously incline to the more philosophic methods of expressing the same ideas, but ideas, which, in the philosophic dialect, are not the same to any mind but theirs.

This was the fatal defect in the preaching of that class in the English pulpit represented by Dr. Blair. Men who are not deficient themselves in evangelical faith may fall into the same error. It is one of the perils incident to the intellectual refinement and the social culture which Christianity creates. The pulpit should be made a power of control over that culture, not a servitor to it. This it may be made by cultivating in its ministrations the dialect which is most precise in the expression of the facts of the Christian life as realized in the experience of the common mind. Dr. Chalmers saw reason, in the drift of the Scottish pulpit of his day, to warn the clergy that "Christianity is not a system of respectability only." The diction of the pulpit often gives a hint of social distinctions with which it ought to have nothing to do. If it must be tested by any thing in social caste, the test must be the fidelity of its expression of the common mind. To the common mind trained under faithful preaching, holiness means more than virtue; sin means more than fault; God means more than heaven — more even than Deity; salvation means more than reformation; the atonement means more than divine favor; a Saviour means more than a heavenly Father; and the life eternal means more than the soul's immortality. That is a false taste which would substitute the general for the precise phraseology; and that is an effeminate decadence in which the pulpit slides down that plane unconsciously. From the "common" to the "respectable," in the dialect of the pulpit, is a long and chilling distance.

The principle involved in this view applies as well to the retention, in preaching, of certain biblical emblems of truth. The degeneracy of which I speak encourages the obsolescence of many of these, specially of those which express the comminatory aspects of truth. On these subjects the pictorial style of the Bible is more exact in the conception it gives to the popular mind than the philosophic dialect of the schools. This is one illustration of the principle to which reference has been made before, that a truth illuminated by metaphor may be more exactly true than the same truth expressed in any language which literal speech can invent. Figurative utterance of such truths is often the ultimate expression of all forms of them possible to the human mind. We get a more exact notion of the lightning by seeing its lurid coruscations in the midnight sky than we can from any description of it possible to language. So, from the biblical emblem "hell fire," we obtain a more truthful idea of the future woe than we can from any or all of the literal synonyms of the word "retribution." Is, then, the "lake of fire" a literal fact? No; but to a human mind clothed by a human body it is the more precise expression of the reality, simply because there is more of it. We get but an approximation to the reality in any form of language; but the figurative form is the ultimate form, beyond which expression is impossible.

LECTURE IX.

PERSPICUITY OF STYLE; ITS FOUNDATION IN CLEARNESS OF THOUGHT.

For the object of the present discussions, perspicuity of style needs to be considered in reference to four things, — thoughts, imagery, words, construction.

I. Perspicuity must, like every other quality of a good style, find its foundation in the thought to be expressed. An important class of the causes of obscurity, therefore, concerns the thoughts of a discourse.

1. Obscurity may arise from the absence of thought. Dr. Campbell writes: "It hath been said, that in madmen there is as great a variety of character as in those who enjoy the use of reason; and in like manner it may be said of nonsense, that, in writing it, there is as great scope for variety of style as there is in writing sense." Men may write nonsense unconsciously. What conception of truth have preachers had in discoursing of "the eternal Now"? Certain it is, that if the pulpit has meant by this phrase any thing more or other than the omniscience of the Divine Mind, they have experimented with an inconceivable idea. Language is at a deadlock at the outset. If the phrase means the absence, from the consciousness of the Divine Mind, of all knowledge of succession in time, it is nonsense, in the sense of being an impossible notion of the Deity.

A preacher is mentioned also by Dr. Campbell, who once remarked it, as evidence of the goodness of God,

that to our minds the moments of time come in succession, and not simultaneously; "for," said he sagely," if they had been so ordered as to come simultaneously, the result would have been infinite confusion." Criticism can characterize such a remark no otherwise than by its echo, — "infinite confusion." What can surpass it in vacuity of thought? Who can parallel it with an imitation or a caricature? It reminds one of Southey's criticism on a literary production which he deemed a monument of folly. He said that "such pure, involuntary, unconscious nonsense is inimitable by any effort of sense."

This is sometimes, I will not say often, the real and only cause of obscure passages in sermons otherwise intelligible, — that the preacher talks on when he has nothing to say. He plays on the keys of the organ, with no wind in the pipes. His mind is vacant of thought; and to fill up time, or to round out the rhythm of a sentence, he speaks words — words — words! For the moment he belongs to the class of authors of whom Whately says, "They aim at nothing, and hit it." Patches of such vacuity may be found in sermons which as a whole are thoughtful.

Preachers are not wholly without excuse for this defect. Their labor in mental production is almost immeasurable and incessant. No other profession in this respect lays so heavy a tax on the mind's creative faculty. An eminent member of the Boston bar once said, in comparing his own profession with that of the pulpit, that he did not know a man among his professional brethren who ever did or could, for one year consecutively, create the equivalent of two sermons a week such as he listened to every Sunday. No mind is so rich in its resources, and so perfectly under the disci-

pline of its own will-power, that it can do such work without sometimes and transiently writing mechanically, and therefore writing nonsense. The mind at such times works as in dreams. The links and rivets of logical thinking are broken, and the style of expression degenerates into mumbling.

2. A much more frequent cause of obscure expression in sermons is vagueness of thought. Vague thinking necessitates indefinite utterance. Utterance can be no wiser than the thought is. A man can not say what is not in him to say. The style of vague thinking can not be specific. It has no point. The thinking is not forceful enough to compel clear expression. Sydney Smith has written a capital criticism on Dr. Samuel Parr: "He never seems hurried by his subject into obvious language." This hits the mark of defect in many sermons. A preacher's subject, if he has one, and has so mastered it as to have clear thoughts upon it, will force him into an obvious style. He can not help it if the subject be one which falls within the range of the hearer's comprehension. He must speak the *plain* truth, as we call it, like a plain man talking to plain men.

It used to be said of Napoleon, that he did not understand diplomacy, and that he never practiced the diplomatic style. The statesmen of Europe were perplexed, because they could always understand him; that is, his style was that obvious style which can not be misunderstood, if the author has written what he meant. When he left Paris for Waterloo, he declared his purpose to deliver a pitched battle at or near that locality, in language so plain, that his opponents could not believe that he was not deceiving them. They well-nigh lost the battle by not taking him at his word. A certain critic of Napoleon's style attributes this clearness of it,

so uncommon in the dispatches of statesmen, to the uniform intensity of his thinking. His mental working in all things was so intense, that his style was illuminated. He could not help saying what he meant, though Europe was in a maze because they could always understand him. This is the kind of mental working which the pulpit needs, — intense working, which sets style on fire by the friction of thought and language. Several memoranda deserve to be noted on this topic.

One is, that vague thinking may be mistaken for profound thinking. This is not infrequent in the pulpit Difficult themes belong to the pulpit. Vague thinking on such themes clothes itself in general terms. These general terms re-act on the preacher's mind, leading him to believe that the generalness is the necessary sign of profoundness. The obscurity which springs from his own poverty of thought he attributes to the inevitable poverty of language in dealing with such thought. "Words, words, nothing but words," is the criticism of Carlyle on some of the nebulous poetry of Robert Browning. Similar is the criticism which the robust sense of the common people is sometimes tempted to pass upon philosophical passages in sermons. It is not fair to an attentive and sensible hearer to pass off upon him thoughts half formed, under the name of deep thinking.

What do the common people mean when they describe a preacher as "a great generalizer"? Usually they mean, that he is obscure, through the want of finished thinking. Fontenelle's rule in composition was this: "I always try first to understand myself." No man will write obscurely who thoroughly understands himself. No speaker will speak obscurely in oral address who will first faithfully practice his speech on himself as an

imaginary hearer. "Should I understand this sermon if it came first upon me with no preparatory thinking, and in oral form, in the style which I have given to it?" Apply this test, and the probabilities are that it will never delude you into preaching of the nebulous order.

Again: vagueness of thought is a fruitful source of self-contradictory style. Often our chief difficulty in understanding a writer is, that we can not attach any idea to his language without making him contradict himself: therefore we infer that we do not understand his meaning. Yet, in the majority of cases, we probably do understand him as well as he understood himself. Men of willful opinions are often led into an obscure style by self-contradiction. Their conclusions are foregone conclusions. With evidence, or without it, they are bound to reach certain results. They are impatient of the cautious, logical process which would disclose their inconsistency. Hence they launch into a style, which, to self-possessed minds, appears to be self-contradictory, so far as it expresses any thing.

The Duke of Wellington once said that the true way to advance contradictory propositions was to affirm both vehemently, not attempting to prove either. Less positive minds than his choose to disown the contradiction, and therefore they cover it in a November fog. This may be done with no distinct consciousness of the deception. The speaker is self-deceived. I can not but think that the popular notion, that human responsibility and predestination are irreconcilable opposites is due in great measure to the want of masterly thinking, and the existence, consequently, of obscure teaching, on those subjects in the pulpit. A preacher should never be content to leave the impression on his hearers that those truths are irreconcilable to the human mind. They are

not so. We had better not preach on them at all than to plunge them into that quagmire, and leave them there.

Further: the remedy for obscurity of style arising from vagueness of thought, obviously is either a more thorough discipline or a more thorough furnishing of the mind. In such an exigency one must have a more vigorous thinking power, or certain materials of thought which are absent. Sometimes both are needed. The vital point to be observed is, that no mere study of diction as such can remedy such an evil as this. Study of one's style may disclose the evil, but can not remedy it. The remedy lies back of rhetorical criticism. More power or more knowledge, or both, must fit a man to discuss subjects on which his style exhibits such incompetence.

3. Obscurity of style related to the thoughts of discourse may spring also from the affectation of profound thought. It is one of the subtle laws of nature, that nothing which is affected is so clear as that which is genuine. In judging men, we call a genuine character a transparent character. So, in style, nature is more intelligible than art.

Let it be observed, that clear thinking may be made obscure in the expression by the attempt to clothe it in the philosophical forms of profound thinking. The real thought, the kernel when the husk is off, may be so simple that it is the last thing a hearer would suspect of being so magnificently hidden. Let this be illustrated by an extract from the essays of the late George Brimley, librarian of Trinity College at Cambridge. He is discoursing upon the nature of poetry, and he soliloquizes thus: "A poetical view of the universe is an exhaustive presentation of all phenomena, as individual

phenomenal wholes, of ascending orders of complexity, whose earliest stage is the organization of single co-existing phenomena into concrete individuals, and its apotheosis the marvelous picture of the infinite life, no longer conceived as the oceanic pulsation which the understanding called cause and effect." Indeed! Yet the writer was no fool. His essays show that he had some thoughts. Probably one is struggling, like Milton's half-created lion, to see the light in this fathomless and boundless revery. I venture the guess that the kernel of it was a very simple thought, which Dugald Stewart would have expressed in three lines which an educated man need not have read a second time. Read this of George Brimley's the twenty-second time, and are you the wiser?

In some instances, by the legerdemain of style, a truism may be made unintelligible. A writer in the "Westminster Review" discourses in this fashion: Another curious observation upon philosophic activity is, that the co-ordination of all the functions which constitute the whole intellectual energy of philosophic minds is preserved in its plenitude for only a short period of their whole duration of life. There occurs, and generally at an early point in middle life, an epoch when the assimilation of scientific material and its ulterior elaboration proceed with an energy more vigorous and more continuous than is ever afterwards attained by the same mind. This phase of philosophical super-activity is always succeeded by an intellectual phase characterized by less expenditure of simultaneous powers." I do not say that this has no meaning. But what is its meaning? If I do not miss it in the volume of its long-tailed vocabulary, it is this, and this is the whole of it, — that the mind of a metaphysician is more vigorous for a time

near middle life than it ever is afterwards. Why could not the reviewer say that, if he must say a thing so obvious, and be content?

Again: the fact deserves notice, that, in the study of modern philosophy, a professional man needs to be on his guard lest his style of public speech should become infected with the disease of artificial depth. I find in much of the philosophical style of our age, as it seems to me, a needless multiplication of novel words, odd words, imported words, archaic words, general words for specific thoughts, and a haziness of general effect, which wearies a reader as a blurred picture wearies the eye. When the writers are charged with obscurity of diction, and they excuse it on the ground of its necessity to that which they call "the higher thinking," I confess that I am incredulous. That necessity appears to me to be pushed to the extreme. Many thoughts which I find wrapped up in this style of "the higher thinking" do not look, when one comes at them, to be so inexpressibly lofty. They lie on a plane a long way this side of the third heaven. Often they are very simple thoughts, not novelties in philosophy, but susceptible of expression in very homely English.

That a profound mind doing honest work can not make profound thought clear, implies intellectual disease or imbecility in the rest of mankind to an extent which is never true, except in effete or decadent races. It is more probable that some of our philosophical writers strain after the look of profoundness when the reality is not in them. That was a perilous principle which Coleridge advanced respecting the capacity of human language, that it can not express certain metaphysical ideas, and therefore that clearness of style in a metaphysical treatise is, *prima facie*, evidence of super-

ficialness. As Coleridge was accustomed to illustrate it. the pool in which you can count the pebbles at the bottom is shallow water: the fathomless depth is that in which you can see only the reflection of your own face. This would be true if thinking were water. But the principle opens the way to the most stupendous impositions upon speculative science. It tempts authors to the grossest affectations in style. In the study of modern psychology, therefore, a preacher needs to be on his guard. We may safely treat as a fiction in philosophy any thing which claims to be a discovery, yet can not make itself understood without huge and unmanageable contortions of the English tongue.

Further: it should be noted, that, when this disease of affected profoundness finds its way into the pulpit, it is probably, of all faults in homiletic discourse, the most offensive if it be detected. Sometimes, though rarely, a perverted taste exists, which fails to detect the imposition on good sense. Then hearers are fascinated by a dialect which nobody understands, but which to discerning ones sounds hollow. They throng around the puffing and swelling preacher, as boys crowd around a drum, and for essentially the same reason. A Presbyterian missionary in Syria writes that Mr. Moody's sermons, when translated into Arabic, do not at all meet the Arabic ideal of an oral discourse, because they are so easily understood. The popular idea of a sermon there, he says, is that it should be composed in the profoundest possible dialect. The less hearers can understand of it, the better. They crave only the reverberations of it on the tympanum of the ear.

When Occidental taste falls into such juvenility, all we can say of it is, that it must needs be that offenses come, but woe unto him through whom they come!

Such an affectation can not exist here, unless it be created and fostered by the pulpit. It is never originated by the good sense of the people. When it does exist among them, it is short-lived. Good sense in the pulpit is speedy death to it. While it lasts, we have only to ignore it, and preach like plain men talking to plain men. If the times seem out of joint, and will not bear it, remember Dr. Arnold's reply, when cautioned against a style of speech which the times would not bear: "I do not see how the times can help bearing any thing that an honest man has the resolution to do." Any false taste in a community will give way to courage.

4. Thought may give occasion for obscurity of style by its real profoundness. Subjects may be too abstruse for oral discussion. Speculation may be too refined for popular comprehension. Argument may be too long-protracted for the power of attention in a promiscuous assembly.

One form of this defect is that of pursuing simple themes into complicated relations. No theme is so simple that it can not be handled abstrusely. The most simple truths are elemental truths. They are principles. They are foundations and pillars on which systems of truth are constructed. Language can not render all the relations of such truths clear to all minds in oral speech. A preacher encounters in the discussion of such themes a peril which grows out of his very culture: it is that of pursuing his theme into intricate sinuosities of treatment in which his own mind may revel, but the minds of his hearers be "in wandering mazes lost." The subject may be a trite one: its very triteness may be his temptation. Obscurity may be caused by the desire to avoid commonplace. We find examples of such themes in the being of God, the duty of repentance, the nature

of sin, the necessity of an atonement: in short, in any of the standard and hackneyed topics of the pulpit. The most obscure sermon it has ever been my lot to hear was a sermon on the truthfulness of Christ.

Robert Southey says of Edmund Burke, "Few converts were made by him, because, instead of making difficult things easy, he made things easy in themselves difficult to be comprehended, by the manner in which he presented them; evolving their causes, and involving their consequences, till the reader whose mind was not habituated to metaphysical discussion knew neither in what his argument began, nor in what it ended." A very truthful criticism is this upon some sermons.

A caution, however, needs to be observed on this danger: it is, that we should not underrate the power of language to make difficult things clear to the popular comprehension. This, I think, is the present tendency of clerical judgment in our own country. We are too timid, rather than too bold, in choosing abstract themes for the pulpit. Discussions are imagined to be above the level of the people which are not so. Subjects are excluded, therefore, which need discussion. One of the tests of a preacher's homiletic powers is the degree of his faculty of making profound thought lucid to undisciplined minds. Remember always that abstractness is not necessarily abstruseness. Remember, also, that the Anglo-American mind is wonderfully elastic in the reach of its command over great and fundamental truths. The American town-meeting is a powerful educator of the people. It creates a great many thinkers upon the principles and roots of things.

Preachers may learn wisdom in this respect from secular oratory. The most successful speakers to the popular mind on secular themes are, after all, the men

of thought. There is a certain tact often witnessed in secular speech which plants itself never below the level of the popular thought, always above that level, yet so near it as to secure popular sympathy, and always to make itself understood. I doubt whether this tact is ever consciously chosen as an expedient: it is a gift. But the men who possess it never fail to gain a hearing; and as a rule they succeed, when demagogues who despise the people, yet truckle to their tastes, fail.

When President Lincoln was once inquired of what was the secret of his success as a popular debater, he replied, "I always assume that my audience are in many things wiser than I am, and I say the most sensible thing I can to them. I never found that they did not understand me." Two things here were all that Mr. Lincoln was conscious of, — respect for the intellect of his audience, and the effort to say the most *sensible* thing. He could not know how those two things affected the respect of his audience for *him*, their trust in him as their superior, and their inclination to obey him on the instant when they felt the magnetism of his voice. But he saw, that, say what he might in that mood, he got a hearing, he was understood, he was obeyed.

So it will inevitably be in the pulpit. The best preaching is the "sensible" preaching. Good sense can make any thing intelligible which good sense will wish to utter to the popular mind, or which good sense will care to hear. We are in more danger of suppressing truth which hearers can understand than of attempting to express truth which is above them. "Overshooting" is not so frequent as shooting into the ground. Wordsworth says, "There is no excuse for obscurity in writing; because, if we would give our

whole souls to any thing, as a bee does to a flower, there would be little difficulty in any intellectual employment." John Foster was a marvel and a model of patience and of energy in forcing profound thought into expression. He often spent hours, as he tells us, in the labor which he calls "pumping;" that is, forcing his thoughts up to the surface of a familiar diction. Read his essays; see what his thoughts were; then observe the transparency of his style. With such an example in view, one need never despair of discussing intelligibly in the pulpit any subject which ought ever to be heard of there.

5. A speaker's thought may lead him into an obscure style through his own familiarity with it. The style of a studious preacher may grow more obscure as he grows older. Language may become less serviceable to him in the communication of thought, because less necessary to him in its conception. The Rev. Dr. Gillies says of the Rev. Dr. Maclaurin, that his style underwent this change so perceptibly as to suggest a decline of intellect. Probably it was no more than the heedlessness of a mind which consulted its own wants rather than those of its readers. The very perfectness of a man's knowledge may impair his power to communicate, unless he protects himself against the danger by voluntary precaution.

6. Thought may lead to obscure expression through rapidity in the succession of thoughts. The majority of minds require time to take in a difficult thought, and make acquaintance with it. They need to dwell upon the point of an argument. They require illustration, varied statement, repetition. A diffuse style, therefore, the sign of a slow succession of thought, is a necessary style for some subjects and some audiences.

Rapid succession of disorderly thought is the general infirmity of excited minds. Extemporaneous speakers are often thus embarrassed. The wheel takes fire from the friction of its own revolutions. This is the cause of the majority of the blunders of extemporaneous speaking. Irish "bulls" have their counterparts in some of the phenomena of extemporaneous oratory. They are not expressive of a vacant mind, but of the reverse. They indicate a freshet of thought. The speaker in the English Parliament, who, in the tumult of patriotic enthusiasm, said, "Sir, I would give up half, yes the whole, of the constitution, to save the other half," had a thought to express, and a valuable one; but it overslaughed his tongue. The speaker, who, in a paroxysm of tempestuous loyalty, said, "Sir, I stand prostrate at the feet of my sovereign," was not affecting any surprising feat of gymnastic agility. His thought formed itself first in the standing posture: the prostration was an after-thought.

Sir Roche Boyle, whose speeches have so long been a thesaurus to rhetorical writers of illustrations of rhetorical blunders, was not void of thought, even in the well-known instance of his inquiry, "What has posterity done for us?" He had a thought which was entirely logical to his purpose. It was that of the reasonableness of reciprocity of service. Probably he was driven into a vacuum of thought by the burst of laughter which followed, and which he met by explaining, "By posterity, sir, I do not mean our ancestors, but those who are to come immediately after." One of the aims of conquest in the mastery of extemporaneous speech is that of beating back the rush and trampling of thoughts which huddle themselves into these bovine forms of style.

LECTURE X.

PERSPICUITY OF STYLE, CONTINUED. — THE USE OF IMAGERY.

II. PERSPICUITY of style, having its foundation in the thoughts to be expressed, is further affected by *the use of imagery.*

1. Obscurity may arise from incongruous imagery. Imagery is painting. The expressiveness of it is measured by its congruity. More frequently than otherwise, the incongruity of imagery consists in its irrelevance. It may not be contradictory to the truth, but may have no natural concern with it. Lord Shaftesbury speaks of a "wilderness of mind." What clear idea does one receive from that? He also writes of an "obscure climate" of the human intellect. What is an obscure climate, what is any "climate," of the intellect? Make pictures mentally of these attempts at imagery, and what is the look of them? Such images blur thought by taxing the attention to discover resemblances which do not exist. Congruity is the first requisite and test of a genuine imaginative diction.

2. Similar is the obscurity caused by the use of mixed imagery. The Hon. Henry A. Wise of Virginia will be immortalized for having executed John Brown, rather than for perpetrating the following before the House of Burgesses: "Virginia has an *iron chain* of mountains running through her center, which God has placed there to *milk* the clouds and to be the source

of her *silver rivers.*" What, in detail, is the fact corresponding to a chain of iron drawing milk from the clouds, which flows in rivers of silver? The juxtaposition, also, of the milk and the river, is quite too suggestive of a less dignified occurrence. Surely the mind of man, when it seriously expresses itself in such inconceivable compounds, seems fearfully and wonderfully made.

The mixture of metaphor with literal expression is often the cause of obscurity. The interpretation of the Fifty-first Psalm is disputed, chiefly because of its intermingling of letter and figure. "I acknowledge my trangressions," "Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation:" these are indubitably literal. "Purge me with hyssop," "that the bones which thou hast broken may rejoice:" these are as indubitably figurative. Therefore the theological world is divided on the question whether the following is literal or figurative: "I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me." Is "original sin" taught in these words, or not? It is purely a question of rhetoric.

3. Obscurity, again, may be occasioned by the employment of learned imagery.

The style of Jeremy Taylor, for the practical uses of preaching, was well-nigh ruined by his excessive use of his classical library. Imagine yourself rehearsing the following passage in a sermon anywhere outside of a Latin school. "They thought there was . . . in the shades below no numbering of healths by the numeral letters of Philenium's name, no fat mullets, no oysters of Lucrinus, no Lesbian or Chian wines. Therefore now enjoy the descending wines distilled through the limbec of thy tongue and larynx; suck the juices of fishes, and the lard of Apulian swine, and the condited

bellies of the scarus: but lose no time, for the sun drives hard, and the shadow is long, and the days of mourning are at hand." Jeremy Taylor preached this gospel at Golden Grove, which was nearly as if you should preach it at the west parish of Andover. He had an audience of less than fifty, of whom possibly five remembered dimly something of their studies of Horace at Oxford, and the rest knew no more of what the preacher meant than of the sources of the Nile.

I have elsewhere noticed that Charles Sumner obscured his oratory by excessive indulgence in classical allusions, which, even in the United-States Senate, belong to the dying reminiscences of collegiate life. He used to roll forth from a too faithful memory a string of classical recollections, which his hearers felt to be untimely when the liberty of the nation was trembling in the scale. His opponents could charge upon him sentiments which he disowned, because the clearness of his meaning was obscured through the loss of force occasioned by illustrative materials which were not in keeping with a national emergency.

It should be remarked, however, that the objection to learned imagery is no apology for low imagery. The pulpit demands an elevated style in imagery as in vocabulary. You can scarcely do greater violence to the popular associations with the pulpit, and therefore to your hearer's prompt acceptance of your meaning, than by the use of coarse, vulgar, or ludicrous illustrations. The popular mind never originates vulgar associations with the pulpit, never craves vulgar materials from the preacher. If they receive them from him, their repugnance of feeling will often obscure their perceptions of his meaning. Any thing wil' embarrass the passage of truth to their minds which creates in them a conflict

of taste. A preacher can never safely array against his preaching an outraged sense of reverence among his hearers.

4. Another cause of obscurity in the use of imagery is an excess of imagery. This may obscure the meaning by exaggeration. It may produce the same effect by overloading a thought. Imagery not needed to illustrate a thought must tend to cover it from the hearer's sight. A hearer's power of perception may be impaired by it through mental weariness. Few things are so wearisome to the brain as a rapid review of a gallery of paintings. Aside from weariness of eye, there is an expenditure of thought in that which the spectator must supply by his own imagination. An excessively pictorial style makes a similar demand, and produces a similar effect. Mental weariness thus induced diminishes the clearness of a hearer's perception. Such a discourse, therefore, lives in his memory, only as a jumble of pictures.

The same result may be produced, if weariness is not, by attracting attention to the style for its own sake. Attraction to the style is distraction from the thought. "How beautiful the metaphor! How novel, how luxuriant, how elaborate! One revels in a tropical garden." A hearer who finds time in listening to a discourse to make such silent comments as these, loses by so much the significance, and therefore often the clearness, of the ideas. Why is it that the "Pilgrim's Progress" seldom suggests religious ideas to children? To discern the religious teaching beneath the allegorical painting requires a mature mind. Even for mature minds we write explanatory lectures on the allegory. Edmund Burke often obscured an argument by excess of imagery. Byron said of Curran, that he had heard Curran

speak more poetry than he had ever seen written. It was no compliment to an orator. The style of the pulpit in respect of imagery, I conceive, should be grave, severe, intense, not luxuriant, not rampant.

Excess of imagery is most hurtful when no imagery is needed. Take the following, from John Quincy Adams. His thought is this, that scientists have been obliged to coin nomenclatures from the Greek language. This is a pure fact in philology. In a literal statement it is perfectly clear: it needs no pictorial representation. But Mr. Adams vaults into the imaginative saddle in this style: "The sexual combinations of Linnæus, and the chemical separations of Lavoisier, are alike exhibited in Grecian attire. The loves of the plants must murmur in the same dialect which alone can sound the dirge over the dissolution of water. Neither the nuptials of the blossom, nor the generation of the gas, can be accomplished but under Grecian names. The marriage and the divorce, the generation and the destruction, have found no name by which they could walk the world, without having recourse to the language of Demosthenes and Homer."

One can not pronounce this nonsense. But what is gained by this galloping of fancy over a plain fact in philological history? It needs only a plain statement; the plainer, the better. It is obscured by imaginative verbiage. Some of these figures suggest absolutely no idea which is relevant to the point. What is meant by the assertion that a Greek "dirge" is sounded "over the dissolution of water"? What clear notion does a reader obtain from a picture of "marriage and divorce walking in the language of Homer"? Such a style in oral address can scarcely rise above the intelligibility of dreams.

5. Yet a truth lies over against that which has just been named. If excess of imagery may obscure one's meaning, on the other hand, it may be obscured by the entire absence of imagery as well. Abstract thought often needs to be made palpable: the senses must be called in to the aid of the intellect. When the meaning is not positively vague, it is not impressively clear without a picture. A certain degree of dullness for the want of imagery amounts to obscurity. A very simple book may be unintelligible to a child for the want of pictures. Said the missionary Carey to a young preacher, "I much approved your sermon, except that it had no 'likes' in it. In our Lord's discourses one constantly meets with the phrases 'like this,' 'like that.' Never preach a sermon without 'likes.'"

Military commanders say, that in battle it is the eye which is first vanquished. Similar is the experience of the popular mind under the sway of oral discourse. The first sign that an audience has fairly taken in a speaker's thought, and the whole of it, may often be seen in a hearer's eye. It is often produced by an illustration which has flashed the meaning upon his vision. "I have heard of Thee by the hearing of the ear, but now mine eye seeth Thee, wherefore I repent," is the confession of the patriarch when a new conception of the being of God first dawned on his mind.

This view suggests that the imaginative style in sermons should be studied. It is as proper an object of deliberate study as any other expedient of public speech. Why not? The Rev. Dr. Witherspoon, when criticised for the want of imaginative effort in his sermons, replied, "I have never cultivated posies." This represents the idea which many sensible men have of the cultivation of the pictorial style. They conceive it to

be only the accumulation of finery and frippery. What can such critics say of the usage of some of the first class of pleaders at the bar in picturing their argument to the senses of a jury? The most successful pleaders before juries are of two classes. The one class achieves success mainly by solid logic; the other class, by pictorial vividness. To the latter class belong nearly all the great criminal lawyers in modern practice. But do not these men "cultivate posies"?

Why did Judge Pierrepont, in the trial of Surratt for the assassination of President Lincoln, parade before the jury the maps showing Surratt's line of travel, the guns hidden at Lloyd's tavern, the diary of Booth, his eyeglass, and the registers of the hotels at which Surratt lodged? Not one of these was necessary to a literal statement of the facts, and all could have been proved by testimony. But testimony could not paint the facts to the eye of the jury as this was done by the table on which these mementos were spread out before them. The aim of the prosecution was a purely rhetorical, not a logical one. It was to make the facts more clear by visible symbols. True, it was, in part, to make the facts vivid as well as clear; but it is impossible to separate the two things. Where the aim at perspicuity ends, and the aim at vividness begins, criticism can not determine. Perspicuity is insured if vividness is gained. But was not this "cultivating posies"?

If we can learn any thing from the experience of the leaders of the bar, it is, that for clear, indubitable presentation of difficult themes to the popular mind, the study of imaginative resources is most essential. To no department of public speech can it be more so than to that of the pulpit. The subjects of the pulpit preeminently demand it. The hieroglyphic element in the

earliest forms of written language needs to be reproduced in rhetorical painting to make those subjects clear. The necessity is by no means limited to illiterate hearers. Said the late Judge McLean of the Supreme Court of the United States, "I want sermons enlivened by incident. Preaching should be piquant. I like an occasional anecdote if well put." "Enlivened," "piquant:" these words carry the idea of perspicuity as well. Vividness and clearness differ only in degree. Do we not all obtain clearness of conception from the pictorial newspapers? Why are pictorial illustrations deemed necessary to a modern dictionary of the first class as an aid to definition?

III. The course of these discussions leads us now to observe the relation of perspicuity of style to *the words of a discourse.*

1. It should be remarked, that obscurity will often result from the use of words which are more or less technical to religious usage. We have before considered a pure style as the foundation of a clear style. The necessity of it, especially to oral address, and on religious themes, and to the popular mind, has been remarked. We need not repeat what has been said on these topics. But let the principles which have been advanced be applied to one thing which is the special duty of the pulpit. It is the need of watching the decadence of that phraseology in popular speech and in homiletic usage which expresses the peculiarities of Christian faith and experience. I have defended the right of the pulpit to use religious technicalities, so far as these are a necessity to exact and full expression of Christian thought or feeling. The pulpit has a literary right, in this respect, equal to that of any other department of public speech, or of any secular science. When Christian

peculiarities of thought pass into popular experience. the people have a corresponding right to their religious dialect.

But every such peculiar dialect has a tendency to decay in the popular usage, as well as in the philosophic usage of the pulpit to which I have before referred. The tendency is no peculiarity of religious style. It exists in secular literature as well. It exists in the language of art and in that of politics. Whatever is technical to art, or science, or literature, or religion, has a tendency to die out sooner and more absolutely than the great staple of the language which is common to them all. Religion comes under the common law more obviously than other elements in the life of a people, only because the subjects of religious thought are more vital, and influences are always at work more actively than upon secular life to cause religious life to deteriorate. Therefore the experience of one age becomes imitation to the next age. The creeds of one generation become historic formulæ to the next. The words most vital to both belief and experience cease to mean what they meant at the beginning. The electric life goes out of them; and, for clear expression of the truth, they die. To the popular mind they often become blurred in sense long before they are absolutely and hopelessly defunct. This is a peril to which all forms of religious faith, and forms of worship, and forms expressive of the common religious feelings of men, are exposed.

A conscientious pastor needs to watch this tendency to decadence in religious dialect, and either to arrest it, by infusing a new life into that dialect in the popular conceptions, or to hasten its decline by the adoption of other phraseology in its place. The dialect technical to art or sect or class has no literary right to live an hour

after the necessity of it to express living realities has passed away. Thackeray, for example, cuts to the quick, when he satirizes the use, by the *élite* of the fashionable society of England, of the phrase "miserable sinners" in the Liturgy of the English Church. He implies that to them it has no meaning, and that in the use of it, therefore, they are worse than Pagans. If this be true, the authorities of the church are bound either to revive the real significance of the phrase by more pungent and faithful teaching, or to drop it, as one of the technicalities of religious confession which have become hopelessly extinct. Other phraseology should be substituted for it, — phraseology which shall have a living meaning to living men. Confession of sin is the very last thing to be stereotyped, and trusted to live on its history.

The same necessity of vigilance exists in religious sects whose traditions are not fixed in liturgic forms. Extemporaneous prayer, in the pulpit and out of it, is full of language which needs constant watching lest it should become effete; and this because it is more or less made up of language technical to religious uses. That language thus used is an inheritance. It began to be, in a past age. It expresses the religious life of a bygone generation. It comes under the same law of decay which appertains to all other fixed language. The danger is, that it will become, may have already become, not the symbol, but the substitute, of thought. Profound convictions are imperiled by the continued use of conventional phraseology after the life of it has gone out; so that nothing in the real experience of the people responds to it when they hear it or when they use it. Preaching, praying, singing, talking, and the administration of sacraments, in such a dialect, are hor-

rible attempts to galvanize a corpse. Give to the people any thing but that. Do something, or another thing, or all things, to get rid of conventional meanings of religious words. Supplant imitation by a new experience. Use any language which is necessary to the transformation. In no other way can you make the world believe that an honest church is represented by an honest pulpit.

2. Obscurity may be induced by the preponderance in style of other than the Saxon elements of our language. With no conscious cultivation of a Saxon style, a writer who is eminently clear will possess a style in which the Saxon words outnumber all others. In the English version of the Lord's Prayer, not more than one word in eleven are of other than Saxon origin. This is probably a fair index to the proportions of the language as actually used by the masses of an English-speaking people. It does not follow, that the same proportions are necessary to render discourse intelligible to them from the lips of others; but it does follow, that a style which is pre-eminent for perspicuity will be, in the main, from Saxon roots. Transparent discourse to a popular audience will be largely Saxon in its vocabulary. Discourse not positively obscure may be difficult of comprehension if other than a Saxon vocabulary preponderates. Such a style as the prose style of Milton, even though every word be authorized English, may require in oral address a closeness of attention by the hearer which few audiences will give.

Specially should the emphatic words of a sentence, if possible, be Saxon. What is the defect of Edmund Burke's celebrated diatribe against metaphysicians? "Their hearts," he says, "are like that of the principle of evil himself, — incorporeal, pure, unmixed, dephlegmated, defecated evil." The use of two unusual and

Latinized words obscures the climax of the invective. Few hearers understand them. Journalists especially are often affected in their use of the Latin and Greek elements of the language. One writes of "lethal weapons:" he could not say "deadly weapons," for he would have been too easily understood. Another says, "The water was incarnadined with blood:" he could not say "reddened with blood," for that would have been tame. Other things being equal, it adds much to the transparency of style if the resultant words, in which the emphasis of the idea lies, or the hinges on which the connection turns, be Saxon. The people take in the force of such words easily and quickly.

The thinking and the reading of the masses of the people are in Saxon dialect. Their conversation is almost entirely Saxon. Hence, as hearers, they feel more at home with Saxon speech than with any other. Note one or two illustrations of a Saxon and a Latin dialect in contrast. When Noah had entered the ark, the sacred narrative, as given by our translators, reads, "The Lord shut him in." Suppose they had translated it, "The Lord incarcerated him." Contrast such a word as "inculpate" with its synonym "blame:" is there any doubt which would be most perspicuous to the popular thought? Dr. Chalmers once said in the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, "Mr. Moderator, I desiderate to be informed," etc. Can it be questioned that he would have been more promptly understood if he had been content to say, "I wish to know"?

You will often find that a sentence, every word of which may be authorized English, has a sickly haze hanging over it, as you imagine your utterance of it to hearers, which is entirely due to its Latin vocabulary

It becomes transparent the instant that you strike out Norman words from the points of emphasis, and put Saxon words in their place. This suggests a means of cultivating a perspicuous style, which is of special moment to preachers, who, as Wesley used to say to his clergy, "though they think with the learned, must speak with the common people." In oral address to the people, use, as far as possible, their Saxon vernacular.

3. Perspicuity of style may very obviously be impaired by the habitual use of ambiguous words. Every highly finished language like our own abounds with words which have divergent and even contrasted meanings. We speak, for example, of a "nervous writer," meaning a strong writer: we speak of a "nervous woman," meaning a weak woman. We say, "He overlooked the transaction," meaning that he gave it his supervision: we say, "He overlooked the error," meaning that he neglected to mark it. De Quincey speaks of the "active forces of human nature:" does he mean those which concern external action, or those which are vigorous, as distinct from sluggish? Malthus, in discussing the laws of population, shocked the English people by advocating what he called "moral restraints" upon marriage. Many understood him to mean, by implication, that marriage was a sin. The confusion arose from the ambiguity of one word. Dean Swift spoke of "the reformation of Luther." His opponent understood him to mean the personal revolution in the character of Luther. Ambiguity caused by the location of so insignificant a word as the preposition "of" clouded a page. In the eighth chapter of the Epistle to the Romans, St. Paul is represented as saying, "Neither death nor life . . . shall separate us from the love of God." Commentators tell us that this may

mean the love of God to his people, or their love to him. Here, again, the insignificant preposition becomes the emphatic hinge on which the meaning turns. "What I *want*," said a pompous orator, "is common sense." — "Exactly so!" said his antagonist.

To this class of errors belong those which consist of a literal use of figurative words and a figurative use of literal words. Offenses from this cause against precision of style, at a slight advance in degree of ambiguity become offenses against perspicuity. That which to one audience is defective in precision only, to another will seem defective in clearness. Errors of biblical interpretation arising from this cause are abundant. The whole theory of inherited guilt rests upon such errors. The entire biblical argument for Swedenborgian hermeneutics has the same origin. Language originally used in song has been made to teach dogmatic truth. The early Latin hymnology contains in the germ nearly all the dogmatic errors subsequently interpolated in Christian creeds. As originated, they were the most of them liturgic metaphors, nothing more.

4. Obscurity of style may be caused by an excessive use of general and abstract words. Oral discourse especially demands a specific and concrete vocabulary. An inordinate use of philosophic terms, however intelligible each one may be, will often obscure an idea by the number of such terms. Be wary in multiplying such words as "organic," "relations," "proportions," "unison," "causality," "potential," "transcendent," "subsidiary," "correlative," "objective," "subjective." A style in which such words are the staple of expression may throw a fog over a subject which would otherwise lie in sunlight.

The habitual use of impersonal titles of the Godhead

tends, for a similar reason, to obscure the idea of a personal God. "The Deity," "the Almighty," "the Supreme," "the Eternal," "Providence," "Heaven" — these, as synonyms of "God," tend to blur the popular conception of divine personality. Dr. Arnold detected the dawn of pantheism among the Socinians of England, long before they were themselves aware of it, in their avoidance of the personal names of God.

Affectation in style may take the form of an evasion of concrete expression. Simple, homely, specific words, which a man's good sense first suggests to him, are then abandoned, and he seeks to lift up his thoughts by the leverage of grandiose phraseology. Says one writer of this sort, "There is some subtle essence permeating the elementary constitution of crime, which so operates, that men become its involuntary followers by the sheer force of attraction, as it were." One can "expiscate" an idea from this language (to use one of Hugh Miller's ambitious words); but we can not catch it as it flies in oral speech. A recent political writer describes a celebrated contemporary as a "republican of progressive integrity." What does he mean? If a critic may extort an idea from the language, can a hearer do so on the spur of a moment?

Swedenborg writes: "All the voices of the celestial joyfulness qualify, commix, and harmonize in the fire which was from eternity in the good quality." This is the natural style of discourse in dreams. The style of modern spiritualism illustrates this error in a degree which is suggestive of insanity. Something abnormal in the connection between words and ideas seems to dislocate both. The natural laws of thought seem to be suspended. The modern seer talks and writes in somnambulistic phrases. His constructions are delirious.

As a purely psychological phenomenon, it is no marvel that spiritualism is maniacal in its tendency.

5. Another occasion of obscurity in the use of language is an excessive diffuseness. Ben Jonson speaks aptly of a "corpulent style." Such a style weakens the momentum of thought. An idea sometimes depends for its clearness on the stimulus to attention which springs from quick movement. The corpulent diction is ponderous and slow. Is your thought abstract, and therefore not easily comprehended? Then let it be packed into few words, and discharged upon an audience like the load of a musket. Perspicuity depends on the state of the hearer's thinking as much as on the speaker's thought. Some thoughts we can not make clearer than they are by the mechanism of style: something is needed to quicken the hearer's faculty of perception. Laconic utterance will often do this. You can be hit by a puffball, and not know it; not so if you are hit by a bullet. Similar is the difference between the diffuse and the condensed style as a means of stimulus to the hearer's thinking power.

Preambles, reports of committees, diplomatic resolves, are often obscure through mere distention of style. The authors beat about the bush in fear of saying a thing shortly. A committee on street-railways reports to the Legislature of New York in this manner: "It is not to be denied, that any system which demands the propulsion of cars at a rapid rate, at an elevation of fifteen or twenty feet, is not entirely consistent, in the public estimation, with the greatest attainable immunity from the dangers of transportation." No style deserves to be called perspicuous which needs a second reading. This specimen does so. What is the sense of it expressed shortly? Abandon the negative circumlocution, ex-

change long words for short ones, and speak without indirection. Then the statement is reduced to this, "It is true that people think that a railway twenty feet above the street is dangerous." This is all that the honorable committee meant. But it does not sound elaborate: therefore the idea was bloated into the aldermanic diction.

Herbert Spencer founds the whole theory of style on the principle of economizing the mental force of hearers. Any thing that economizes attention without loss of perception adds to the clearness of an idea. Therefore a style which taxes attention by needless circumlocution tends to produce obscurity. The power of attention in the most willing audiences is limited: beyond its limit, speech to them is nothing but words. Moreover, a redundant style will in many cases distract attention from the thought to the words. Hearers are bewildered. Though disposed to give attention, their minds are diverted from the working words to the sinecures. Style is often, like a hive of bees, made up of workers and drones. Let me give you an illustration selected from a work on natural science, written by a clergyman of the English Church, a graduate of one of the great universities, and who has half a score of honorary initials attached to his name. The style is very tedious: it is comically dull. It is impossible to exaggerate it in caricature. You will bear with it for the sake of observing the multitude of other faults than obscurity which burden a style made plethoric with words.

"All external objects are in their truest sense visible embodiments or incarnations of divine ideas which are roughly sculptured in the hard granite that underlies the living and breathing surface of the world above; penciled in delicate tracery upon each bark-flake that encompasses the tree-trunk, each leaf that trembles in the

breeze, each petal that fills the air with fragrant effluence; assuming a living and breathing existence in the rhythmic throbbings of the heart-pulse that urges the life-stream through the body of every animated being; and attaining their greatest perfection in man, who is thereby bound by the very fact of his existence to outspeak and outact the divine ideas which are the true instincts of humanity, before they are crushed or paralyzed by outward circumstances. . . . Until man has learned to realize his own microcosmal being, and will himself develop and manifest the god-thoughts that are continually inbreathed into his very essential nature, it needs that the creative ideas should be incarnated and embodied in every possible form, so that they may retain a living existence upon earth.'

Have you ever seen a yellow fog hanging over a piece of marshland, which makes the scenery look as if it had the jaundice? Like that is this specimen of style. If the writer had deliberately set about the experiment of overloading his thought with as many defects of diction as he could crowd into the given space, he could not have succeeded better. Note the drawling length of construction, the involutions of clauses upon clauses, "Alps on Alps," the tautological repetitions, the compound words, the new-fangled words, the straining after eccentric words, and the sickliness of the general effect. You find almost every style here but that of good taste and good sense. Imagine its delivery in oral address on a warm Sunday afternoon in July! We may well commend it to the chaplain of a nervine hospital, in which patients congregate who are afflicted with insomnia.

6. A certain cause of obscurity in style is the opposite of the one last named. It is excess of conciseness. In moderate degree, as we have observed, conciseness is an aid to precision, but in excess impairs it: so, in moderate degree, conciseness promotes perspicuity, but in excess clouds it. Hence arises the difficulty of translating sententious authors. Do you not remember how

the style of Tacitus tried your patience? In all languages is found a class of authors, who, like Tacitus, lay too heavy a tax upon interpreters by the multitude of their suppressed words. An excessively elliptical style can not be a very clear style.

But it should be remarked, that, in oral speech, the perspicuity of laconic utterance depends partly on elocution. Aided by an animated delivery, complete thoughts may be conveyed by hints. A shrug of the shoulder may express a thought without words. Pantomime may be made transparent. An Italian talks with his fingers. Some speakers can express more by their eyebrows than by their tongues. Those parts of a sermon which admit of these and other positive auxiliaries to utterance in delivery may admit of an extreme of conciseness which would be unintelligible without such auxiliaries. This effect can not be *put on* tame discourse; but, if the force of thought admits it, delivery becomes the complement of language. The hearer's receptive power is quickened. Tone, look, gesture, attitude, mean as much to him as words. Bold words, unqualified words, extravagant words, the extreme of hyperbole, may not be misunderstood with such a commentary of action. False words may not deceive: contradictions may be true. Of American speakers on the platform, Mr. John B. Gough presents a notable example of this tribute of elocution to style. Mr. Gough in pantomime can express more than some preachers who read without delivery.

LECTURE XI.

PERSPICUITY OF CONSTRUCTION.

A STUDIOUS writer, and especially one whose work compels a careful adjustment of language to the receptive powers of a mixed assembly, soon learns that the perspicuity of style is vitally dependent on *clearness of construction*. Construction is as vital to style as to architecture. Stiffness of construction tends to obscurity. Any thing unfriendly to the sense of ease is inimical to clearness. A hearer wearies of a measured drill of diction in which sentences file out like the squads of a regiment. Monotony of construction tends to obscurity. It lulls the thinking power. It almost necessitates monotone in delivery. Circumlocution in construction tends to obscurity. Did you never discover the cause of a certain dimness of impression in the want of quick movement of discourse? The speaker's thought is a stone in a sling from which it is never ejected. He talks around, and around, and around; yet you do not see the upshot of the business. Abruptness of construction tends to obscurity. Why is Carlyle's "French Revolution" hard reading? Mainly because of the jerks in style, by which English syntax is so rudely dealt with that half your mental force is expended in re-adjusting words to sense. Any defect which is pervasive in style tends so far to defeat the object of speech. Yet very little is achieved if criticism ends with such general ob-

servations as these. I must incur the risk of wearying you by some specifications in detail. A few such will at least illustrate the kind of criticism to which every man should subject his own productions.

1. Recalling, also, the fact observed in a former Lecture, that defects in precision of construction, and defects in perspicuity of construction, are the same in kind, differing only in degree, we may profitably note as one source of obscurity a defective arrangement of *pronouns* and their *antecedents*. Alison the historian says of the Russian soldiers, upon their entry into Dresden, "They lay down to rest behind their steeds, picketed to the walls, *which* had accompanied them from the Volga to the Don." "Which" logically refers to "steeds," grammatically to the "walls." Immediate proximity does not always decide the natural connection between a pronoun and its antecedent. A distant antecedent sometimes by its prominence may displace the nearer and the true one. Prior, in his "Life of Burke," writes, "The war then exciting attention to the American Colonies as one of the chief points in dispute, *they* came out in two volumes octavo." Who are "they"? He means that the chief points in dispute were then published; and so grammatical connection would indicate. But the construction leads one to suppose that the American Colonies were the publishers; yet the word "colonies" is the more remote antecedent. Proximity, then, can not always be trusted to determine the question. Dr. Chalmers, in a speech on Christian union, says, "I am not aware of any topics of difference which I do not regard as so many men of straw; and I shall be delighted if these gentlemen get the heads of the various denominations together, and make a bonfire of *them*." Bonfire of what, or of whom? — of the "men

of straw," or of the "heads of the denominations"? Here, again, proximity does not settle the question. The more remote antecedent is the true one.

Sometimes confusion is created by the repetition of the same pronoun with different antecedents. Archbishop Tillotson writes: "Men look with an evil eye upon the good that is in others, and think that *their* reputation obscures *them*, and that *their* commendable qualities do stand in *their* light; and therefore *they* do what *they* can to cast a cloud over *them*, that the shining of *their* virtues may not obscure *them*." Who are "they"? Who are "them"? What is "their"? What, who, which, is any thing in this round-robin of pronouns? A burlesque on grammatical antecedents could not be more adroitly executed.

Sometimes this defect amounts to a blundering obliviousness of all antecedence. The following tearful reproof was given by a judge of the State of New York to a prisoner just convicted: "Prisoner at the bar, nature has endowed you with a good education and respectable family connections, instead of *which* you go around the country stealing ducks." This is found among the "Humors of the Day." But in what is it essentially less elegant or accurate than the following, from Loring's "Hundred Boston Orators"? "William Sullivan was grandson of John Sullivan, who came from Ireland in a ship *which* was driven by stress of weather into a port on the coast of Maine, and settled at Berwick." How did John Sullivan's ship reach Berwick? Is Berwick one of the ports on the coast of Maine? Again he writes: "His oration produced such a strong impression, that *it* led to his election to the House of Representatives, and was afterwards elected to the Senate." Are orations eligible to the Senate in Massachusetts?

This blundering in antecedence is often burlesqued by Mr. Dickens. His colloquial pictures of low life are full of it. In the extreme it marks the absolute absence of culture. Bret Harte illustrates this in the "Heathen Chinee." "Which I wish to remark," says "truthful James;" and again, "which we had a small game."

This defect sometimes destroys, not only the finish of an elegant style, but the very substance of the speaker's meaning. The following incident in the history of the United-States Senate will illustrate this: —

The 7th of March, 1850, was a critical date in the career of Daniel Webster. He then delivered his last great speech in the Senate. It was in defense of the Fugitive-Slave Law. The country rang with denunciations and defenses of that speech till he died. One of the most effective anathemas upon it depended on the antecedent of a pronoun. As reported at first, the speech read thus: "Mr. Mason's bill, with some amendments, *which* I propose to support to its full extent." This committed Mr. Webster to the bill as it then stood with amendments then before the Senate. Some of those amendments were deemed by antislavery men the most atrocious features of the bill. "But," said Mr. Webster, "I have been misreported. What I said was this, 'Mr. Mason's bill, which, with some *amendments*, I propose to support in its full extent.'" This committed him to the bill indeed, but with amendments of his own, which might ameliorate the bill, and render it less objectionable to his constituents. His reputation with them hung for a time upon the syntax of that one sentence. The death of the great statesman two years later was attributed by many to his loss of the nomination and election to the Presidency. If this was true, his epitaph might have been inscribed, with more truth than is com-

mon to epitaphs, "Died of the dislocation of a relative pronoun."

Few writers exist who do not sometimes blunder in the adjustment of pronouns to their antecedents. Says Reinhard, in his "Memoirs and Confessions," "I have always had difficulty in making a proper use of pronouns. Indeed, I have taken great pains so to use them that ambiguity should be impossible, and yet have often failed in the attempt." If a careful writer and a practiced critic often failed, what can be expected from a reckless writer, to whom study of style appears contemptible?

2. A similar source of obscurity in construction is a defective arrangement of *adjectives* and *adverbs*. Adjectives and adverbs are qualifying words. This is their sole use. What do they qualify? is often a capital inquiry, on which the whole sense depends. "Such was the end of Murat at the premature age of forty-eight:" so writes Mr. Alison. His construction does not make sense: Murat's age could not be "premature." Did he reach the fatal age of forty-eight in less time than his contemporaries? Alison means to say, "Such was the premature *end* of Murat," etc.

"The command was reluctantly forced upon Prince Eugene," he writes. Did Napoleon, then, act against his own will? The historian says that, but the connection shows that he did not mean that. He meant to say, that the command was received with reluctance. Again he writes, in speaking of Napoleon: "He could only live in agitation; he could only breathe in a volcanic atmosphere." That is to say, in agitation and in a volcanic atmosphere, all that he could do was to live and to breathe. Good sense is this, but just the sense which Alison did not mean. Change the location of the ad-

verb, and you perceive what he did mean, "He could live only in agitation; he could breathe only in a volcanic atmosphere." Once more: "When Napoleon's system of government became unfortunate alone, it was felt to be insupportable." Does he mean that it became insupportable when misfortune found it without allies? Not at all. He means to say, "*Only* when Napoleon's system of government became unfortunate, it was felt to be insupportable."

The location of an adverb is one of the most perplexing details of composition. One must have a very well trained and quick taste to decide upon it intuitively with uniform accuracy. Take, for example, the word "only," which is sometimes adverbial, and sometimes adjective, in its qualifying force. I select from Gibbon's History a sentence of moderate length, which contains the word. Observe how many distinct meanings may be obtained by simply sliding it gradually from the beginning to the end of the sentence.

First, "*Only* they forgot to observe, that, in the first ages of society, a successful war against savage animals is one of the most beneficial labors of heroism;" that is, they did some things well, but one thing not well, — "they forgot to observe," etc. Secondly, "*They* only forgot to observe," etc.; that is, either they were the only persons who did so; or, thirdly, they did not intentionally neglect the fact, they only *forgot* it. Fourthly, "They forgot to observe, that only in the *first* ages of society," etc.; that is, there is but one period in the history of society in which the fact observed is true. Fifthly, "They forgot to observe, that, in the first ages only of *society*," etc.; that is, it is not true in the ages preceding organized social life. Sixthly, "They forgot to observe, that, in the first ages of society,

only a *successful* war against savage animals," etc.; that is, not war which is a failure. Seventhly, "They forgot to observe, that, in the first ages of society, a successful war only *against* savage animals," etc.; that is, not a war for their preservation. Eighthly, "They forgot to observe, that, in the first ages of society, a successful war against only *savage* animals," etc.; that is, not a war against animals of domestic use. Ninthly, "They forget to observe, etc., war against savage animals is only *one* of the most beneficial labors;" that is, there are other such labors of heroism. Tenthly, "They forgot to observe, etc., a successful war against savage animals is one of only the *most* beneficial labors of heroism;" that is, it is not to be deemed a labor of inferior worth; or, eleventhly, "They forgot to observe, etc., that such a war is one of only the most beneficial *labors* of heroism;" that is, it is not to be regarded as a pastime. Twelfthly, "They forgot to observe, that, etc., is one of the most beneficial labors of *heroism* only;" that is, no virtue inferior to heroism is competent to the task.

Here are no less than twelve distinct shades of thought, not all of them elegantly, not all precisely, but all perspicuously, expressed, with the aid of emphasis in the reading, by simply sliding one word from point to point from the beginning o the end of a sentence of but twenty-seven words.

It is said in one of our standard text-books on rhetoric, that it has been proved by experiment, that the line in one of Gray's poems,

"The plowman homeward plods his weary way,"

can by transposition be read in eighteen different ways without losing good English sense. The words of the

line are susceptible of over five thousand different combinations. One writer adduces a sentence of which the words are susceptible of four hundred and seventy-nine millions of distinct combinations. A curious writer transcribing them at the rate of a thousand a day would complete the record in thirteen hundred and twelve years. In the same proportion of grammatical constructions to alphabetic combinations which exists in the possibilities of the line from Gray, the elements of this sentence would admit of more than seventeen hundred thousand grammatical sentences. This illustrates the degree of peril to which a careless writer is exposed, of saying what he does not mean. It illustrates, also, the difficulty which a critical writer may experience in saying with perfect perspicuity what he does mean.

De Quincey confirms this view. In some remarks on the writings of St. Paul he observes: "People who have practiced composition as much and with as vigilant an eye as myself know also, by thousand of cases, how infinite is the disturbance caused in the logic of a thought by the mere position of a word so despicable as the word 'even.' . . . The station of a syllable may cloud the judgment of a council."

3. Obscurity in construction may be caused by a defective arrangement of the *qualifying clauses* of a sentence. The laws which govern qualifying clauses are the same with those which govern qualifying words. The danger of obscurity is therefore the same. "When the foundation of the Pagan mythology gave way, the whole superstructure, of necessity, fell to the ground:" thus writes that "vigilant" writer De Quincey, in one of his philosophical essays. Did the Pagan doctrine of "necessity" depend on the Pagan mythology? and did

he mean to say that? He does say it. "I know not how they can be saved from perishing there by famine, without parliamentary assistance:" so writes Robert Southey, in one of his letters. Did the absence of parliamentary aid aggravate the evil of death by starvation? and did he mean to imply that? He does imply it. An affectionate farewell was that recorded by an editor in Connecticut, who published the item of local news, that a man down there "blew out his brains, after bidding his wife good-by, with a shot-gun." But enough: such constructions doom themselves.

4. Another occasion of obscure construction may be a failure to express the true order of thought in the *emphatic portions* of a sentence. We have just been considering obscurity in secondary clauses. The same evil often pervades the whole structure. The order of succession is no order; it jumbles the sense; it is chaos. Dr. Johnson writes: "This work in its full extent, being now afflicted with the asthma, he had not the courage to undertake." Who, what, which, had the asthma? An express-company advertises that it will not be responsible for loss by fire, or the acts of God, or Indians, or other enemies of the government." East Tennessee has a tombstone on which is inscribed this epitaph: "She lived a life of virtue, and died of cholera-morbus caused by eating green fruit in the hope of a blessed immortality. Go thou and do likewise." On a tombstone in a churchyard in Ulster, Eng., is the following: "Erected to the memory of John Phillips, accidentally shot, as a mark of affection by his brother."

Who can solve the enigma, that epitaphs are such a storehouse of rhetorical blunders? Is the world of the living in conspiracy to burlesque the dead? The litera-

ture of the pulpit does not equal in this respect that of the tombstone; but that degree of clearness which is essential to an elegant perspicuity is often sacrificed in sermons by heedlessness of construction. It is no sufficient apology for such errors that they are detected as soon as seen. That is the acme of the evil: hearers detect them as well. A public speaker needs such a habit of mental command of construction, that he shall unconsciously eject such blunders from his style in the heat and swift movement of composition. Style must be as nimble as thought.

5. Obscure construction is often due to an *excessive or careless use of ellipsis.* "He must be an irreparable loss to his family:" so writes Dr. Arnold, in a letter of condolence. The error is not infrequent in the colloquial style of cultivated people. The ellipsis is unwarrantable, for some such construction as this: "His decease occasions an irreparable loss to his family." "The French Government made great exertions to put their navy on a respectable footing; but all their efforts on that element resulted in disaster." On what element? The writer, Mr. Alison, has named none in the context. Alison's History abounds with such misconstructions: search for them anywhere; you can not go wrong.

A common instance of a careless use of ellipsis, which calls for reconstruction, is found in certain forms of inverted sentence. "Conscious of his own importance, the aid of others was not solicited." The biographer of Curran writes of him: "Eminent at the bar, it is in Parliament we see his faculties in full development." You can not parse these sentences by the rules of English syntax. When the Rev. Dr. Harris was inaugurated to the presidency of Bowdoin College, the clergyman

appointed to deliver the address of induction began thus: "Rev. Dr. Harris, sir, having been elected president by the unanimous vote of the boards of trustees and overseers of Bowdoin College, I come on their behalf to induct you," etc. Grammatically this implies that the orator appointed to give the address was the president-elect. To express the real meaning with grammatical precision, the whole sentence must be reconstructed, or broken into two.

A frequent form of careless use of ellipsis occurs in cases in which the phrases "the one" and "the other," or "the former" and "the latter," are employed. Not always are these forms obscure, but they always need to be scrutinized. Specially if they are repeated in a series of antithetic declarations, they need extreme care.

Another form of ellipsis which may easily degenerate into obscure construction is that of a hypothetical expression of an alternative. An example must explain this. "If this trade be fostered, we shall gain from one nation; and if another, from another." "If we hold to the faith of the church, we shall have the confidence of the church; and if not, not." Such ellipses as these carry the idiom to its extreme. The subject must be very simple, and the thought very direct, to render them perspicuous. We can not, for this reason, exclude all extreme ellipses: we can only say that they should be studiously, and not abundantly used. If such a construction suggests a doubt of its clearness, let it be abandoned.

In Froude's "History of England" we find this sentence: "Had Darnley proved the useful Catholic which the Queen intended him to be, they would have sent him to his account with as small compunction as Jael sent the Canaanite captain; or they would have blessed

the arm that did it, with as much eloquence as Deborah." Grant White indicates the excessive omission of needed words in this example by inquiring, "How small compunction did Jael send the Canaanite captain? What degree of eloquence did the arm attain that did *it* with as much as Deborah? What was *it?* How much eloquence was Deborah?" Style which suggests such blind queries is slovenly. The connection may prevent obscurity, but not a loss of precision. Style in which such looseness is indulged will often degenerate from the loose to the obscure. The step between is not so long as that between the sublime and the ridiculous.

6. A still further cause of obscurity in construction is an *abuse of the parenthesis.* Parenthesis may cause obscurity by its position. It may be so located as to break the flow of sense. It may separate a verb from its nominative by too large a hiatus. Some writers thus put into an English sentence the peculiarities of Latin syntax. A Roman ear could bear in this respect what an English ear can not. A parenthesis is a chasm: the hearer must be able to vault over it. Not all hearers are agile enough to do that, if the position of the parenthesis holds asunder vital and emphatic fragments of the thought.

Parenthesis, again, may cause obscurity by its length. It is a digression. If it be of excessive length, it may impair the recollection of that which went before, and attention to that which comes after. One of the difficulties in interpreting the style of St. Paul in his Epistle to the Ephesians is the abundance of parenthetical inclosures of the inspired thought. Parenthesis may also obscure the sense by the form of parenthesis within a parenthesis. An amendment to an amendment, a patch upon a patch, a wheel within a wheel, are bewil-

dering. Rarely is such an involuted style suited to oral speech.

Abuse of parenthesis is one cause of the obscurity of German constructions. A German sentence is often a conglomeration, rather than an arrangement of materials It is voluminous rather than lucid. One critic says that there are books in German which consist of one or two enormous, overgrown, plethoric sentences. De Quincey criticises the German sentence as an arch between the rising and the setting sun. He declares that a sentence by Kant was once measured by a carpenter, and found to be a foot and eight inches long. When not parenthetic in form, a sentence may be so in fact. A reader of it must make it so in order to deliver the sense well. A multiplication of interdependent yet loosely jointed clauses may have the effect of the extreme abuse of parenthesis. To recur once more to the most affluent source of rhetorical blunders, Alison's History, I select the following; viz., —

"Nations, like individuals, were not destined for immortality." This is the thought in a nutshell. Now observe how he expands it. "In their virtues equally as their vices, their grandeur as their weakness, they bear in their bosoms the seeds of mortality; but in the passions which elevate them to greatness, equally as those which hasten their decay, is to be discerned the unceasing operation of those principles at once of corruption and resurrection, which are combined in humanity, and which, universal in communities as in single men, compensate the necessary decline of nations by the vital fire which has given an undecaying youth to the human race." This passage has not one mark of parenthetic structure in punctuation, and it needs none; but its burden of dependent clauses with suspended sense

has the dead weight of parenthesis of the most cumbrous form. The thought is obscure. Nothing else gives to English style such a leaden weight of words as this packing of suggested clauses into all the interstices of a sentence.

7. Obscurity of construction may be caused also by that figure of rhetoric which is technically termed "anacoluthon." Says Mr. Webster, in his apostrophe to Gen. Warren, in the first oration at Bunker Hill, "Ah, Him! How shall I struggle with the emotions which stifle the utterance of *thy* name?" So in the well-known invective of Cicero, in his oration against Verres: "It is an outrage to bind a Roman citizen, etc. . . . to crucify him — what shall I call it?" The idioms of all languages permit this figure of rhetoric when the sentiment calls for it and the speaker means it. The philosophy of it is clear. It implies a sudden overflow of emotion beyond the confines of orderly grammatical speech. Eloquence, in such examples, is like the torrent of the Mississippi: it forces for itself abnormal channels. But let the same license of speech be adopted as a grammatical blunder, and it must pass for that. If no emotion compels its use, no canons of good taste tolerate its use. Few things are so fatal to the transparency of style as the adoption of the impassioned figures of speech when nothing in the thought demands them. Such a style is oratorical abortion.

8. Finally, rhetorical construction may be made obscure, or, if not obscure, not precise, by the combination, in one sentence, of materials irrelevant to each other. Proximity of thoughts in one sentence implies mutual relationship. If none exists, that instinct of good hearing which expects it is balked. It looks for the point of connection, and can not find one. Through sheer

misdirection of attention, the thought escapes. Says a reporter, in giving an account of a case of suicide, "His head was supported by a bundle of clothing, *but* all efforts to revive the vital spark were fruitless." This is ludicrously inconsequent. But is it more so than the following, from a certain historian who shall be nameless? "Tillotson was much beloved by King William and Queen Mary, who appointed Dr. Tennyson to succeed him." Were Tillotson and Tennyson first-cousins? If not, why should the two facts be recorded in the same breath? A reader instinctively searches for the latent connection.

Artemus Ward burlesques this error by saying, "I am an early riser, *but* my wife is a Presbyterian." A passable jest is this for Artemus Ward. But is it any more inconsequent than the following? "Their march was through an uncultivated country, whose savage inhabitants fared hardly, having no other riches than a breed of lean sheep, whose flesh was rank and unsavory by reason of their continual feeding upon seafish." Here we begin with the tramp of an army, and end with the effect of a fish-diet on the quality of mutton. Let an abstract and dignified subject be treated in the pulpit in a style composed of a succession of such sentences as these, and you can easily imagine the effect on the search of a hearer after latent connections. Herbert Spencer's theory of style is so far true as this, that all attention of the hearer which is absorbed in the search for relations which do not exist is so much abstracted from relations which do exist. The result is a waste of both thought and interest. We are never more sightless than when we are looking at nothing, yet struggling to see something.

A single remark is suggested by this review of the

causes of obscurity in construction. It is that the most laborious and original thinkers have been the most faithful critics of construction. Profound thought finds such study a necessity to an expression of itself. John Foster used to spend days on one sentence. He wrote, rewrote, enlarged, contracted, transposed, till he satisfied his thought. He often discussed construction in his correspondence with literary friends. He pursued the study of style with an artist's enthusiasm. True, that enthusiasm was excessive: he injured his style by extreme elaboration. Yet it is doubtful whether much of his thinking could have found expression otherwise. The more he labored for exact expression, the more thought he found which was worth expression. To this is attributable the marvelous richness of some of his essays.

On the contrary, negligent critics of construction become by that very negligence indolent thinkers. The habit soon grows of trying to express none but thoughts which can be expressed with ease. One's thinking tends always to the level of one's habit of utterance. First thoughts in first forms become the staple of such a one's productions. That is the very essence of common place. Such men in the pulpit decry elaborate preaching, and are often suspiciously conscientious in doing so. It can not be too deeply impressed on a youthful writer, that style is thought. In the long-run, each will be the gauge of the other. The study of style is the study of thought. Original thought demands original style, neither of which will come unbidden to a dormant or an indolent mind.

LECTURE XII.

EXCURSUS. — THE INTELLECTUALITY OF THE PULPIT.

BEFORE leaving the subject of perspicuity of style, an *excursus* suggested by it demands attention. It is the inquiry, What principles should regulate the degree of intellectuality of the pulpit? This subject I have partially discussed in another volume, under the title of "Masterly Preaching." But a pastor often encounters the question in a broader range, in which the very existence of the Calvinistic ideal of the pulpit seems to be called in question. I designate it as the Calvinistic ideal of preaching, because it is chiefly in the Calvinistic group of denominations that the most elaborate type of homiletic discourse has found place.

Such discourse is often both assailed and defended on grounds which open the question anew, and in its most general form. Other questions are seen to be vitally dependent on this. We can neither affirm nor deny on those secondary topics, till we have determined the elementary principles by which the intellectual level of the pulpit shall be adjusted. The question whether certain subjects shall be discussed at all in the pulpit, the question of certain methods of rhetorical treatment, the question of transferring to the pulpit certain lines of argument which are indispensable in theological science, the question of a permanent as compared with an itinerant ministry, the question of

evangelistic as related to pastoral preaching, even the question of the length of sermons, and, back of all these, the question what *is* a Christian sermon, — all hinge more or less critically on the degree of intellectuality which is permissible or necessary in the most effective preaching. If there are any principles tending to a settlement of the general question, a young pastor needs to consider them, and to do it early in his ministry. That is a disastrous mistake, prolific of regrets and self-reproaches, which a youthful preacher makes, who tries to sustain his pulpit by a style of preaching, which, intellectually measured, is either beyond his right, or beneath his privilege. Short pastorates, lamentable failures, discouraging disgusts, are the result of early blunders on this theme. They may cast a blight over one's whole ministry. Let us, then, endeavor to settle whatever may be settled by observing the following principles: —

1. The intellectuality of the pulpit should be such, that the *Scriptures* shall be made intelligible and real to the popular mind. This appears self-evident. If the Scriptures are the word of God, they are designed for the world and for all time. They must be assumed to be fitted to the average intelligence of the world, and this in all ages. It must be assumed, also, that they are adapted to the subject of oral address. Preaching, not printing, is the chief means of their dissemination.

Yet the Bible is, as a whole, the most profoundly thoughtful book in all literature. It is a book of principles which run under all history, all philosophy, all political and social economy. It is a book of difficult argumentation. It is a book of occult analogies and correspondences. We characterize it as truthfully when we pronounce it a book of mysteries as when we laud its

simplicity. It comes to us as a revelation from Heaven. It professes to disclose to us a segment of the history of the universe. No human mind, unaided by supernatural wisdom, could have framed such a compendium of the principles of God's government. It is self-evident, then, that no pulpit can be a genuine representative of the volume, which stands on a low plane of intellectual activity. Fearful gaps of inadequacy must exist in the work of such a pulpit. The most severe and intricate labor ever undertaken by the mind of man is that of projecting such a revelation into the mental and moral history of a race of beings who are filled with moral antipathies to its spirit, and doing this mainly by the art of oral speech. In the achievement of such a work, the purely intellectual uplifting of mankind is the great miracle of popular education. It is in keeping with such a work, that no human mind should ever have originated it without the help of miraculous inspiration, and that none can expect success in it without the help of divine illumination.

Estimated thus from the intellectual groundwork of the Bible, preaching must of necessity be a supremely intellectual work. Whatever else it is, it must be this. Genuine preaching, viewed in the sum total of one's ministry, can be nothing less; and genuine hearing of the gospel can be nothing less. It ought never to be a work of mental luxury, either to preach or to hear a revelation from Heaven. Either hearing or preaching which is such a luxury is presumptively defective.

2. The intellectual quality of preaching should be such as to satisfy the intellectual cravings of a *Christianized* people. The pulpit must recognize the civilizing power of Christianity over the general mind. Certain results of religious regeneration are purely

intellectual. Tastes are created by spiritual renewal which are not at all essential to salvation. The thinking power of regenerate mind is put to high service, and fired by intense motives: therefore that power is often reduplicated in volume. A taste for thoughtful discourse, for logical discourse, for the proof of things, for truth in lofty forms, and intricate combinations, and imaginative beauty, — I say, a taste for this superior exercise of intellect is created by the normal action of Christianity upon a regenerated mind. It is purely a craving of intellect. Souls can be saved on a lower plane of intellectual culture. But God's method of working is to lift the race, in the process of redemption, up to the highest plane of being of which the subjects of it are capable under the conditions of probation.

The principle involved in this method is illustrated in other departments of divine procedure. It discloses itself in one of the fundamental laws of physical well-being. Physical health excites a craving for physical exercise. Strength in the arm incites desire to use the arm. The young of all animals crave brisk motion for its own sake. A lamb skips because it can skip. An antelope leaps because it can leap. Consciousness of power rouses the will to use power. So, in the moral world, regeneration elevates intellectual power, and with that, under purely natural law, comes the desire to put that power to use; and hence arises a craving for such materials of thought as shall demand its use.

The Christian pulpit must recognize this law of the working of regenerate mind. Natural cravings under the elevating and refining power of Christianity must be satisfied. This can not be done without a pulpit of broad intellectual vision. Specially should it be noted that this demands a growing and progressive pulpit.

From age to age, from generation to generation, from an ancient to a modern phase of civilization, the pulpit must receive constant increments of intellectual force, if it is to meet, and utilize faithfully, the natural fruits of its own work. The pulpit of a past age can not be in this respect the model for the pulpit of this age, unless Christian thought has in the mean while made no progress. He would not be a wise bishop now who should imitate Archbishop Tillotson in excluding from his sermons every thing which his servant-maid could not understand. Homiletic rules respecting simplicity and intellectuality in preaching, which fitted the church of five centuries ago, ought not, in the natural course of things, to regulate the preaching of to-day. The presumption is, that those rules are antiquated. St. Paul's distinction between "milk" for "babes" and "meat" for "men" is an expressed recognition of this principle of the civilizing power of Christianity as affecting the intellectual character of the pulpit.

3. The intellectual quality of preaching should be such as to balance the *emotional excitements* which Christian truth is fitted to produce. One of the profoundest laws of our being, a law the violation of which is most disastrous to the spiritual economy, is that of proportion between emotion and thought. Distortion ensues, if that proportion is seriously disturbed. Christian truth is fitted to awaken the most intense emotions of which our nature is susceptible. It may be so preached as to create admirable material for fanatic excitements. Those elements of our theology which appeal to fear are in their nature overwhelming. Acting on minds of a certain susceptibility, those which appeal to hope are equally so. The supernaturalism of Christianity is capable of such abuses as to overpower reason. It can

be so preached, that its natural effect shall be morbid alternation between ecstasy and despair. Add to its natural forces, when thus unbalanced, the auxiliary power of sympathy in great assemblies, of the expectant mood in listening to preachers of great reputation, and of novelty in the succession of religious stimulants, and the result may be a conflagration of the religious emotions.

I am unable to resist the historic evidence, that some of the evils attendant and consequent upon the "Great Awakening," in the time of President Edwards, which he deplored, and struggled in vain to control, were, in part, the fruit of the preaching of some of his contemporaries, and might have been reasonably anticipated. Christian theology is a system fitted in the forms of oral speech to command large audiences, and, under certain conditions, to make them frantic with irrational feeling. Its very power to produce the extreme of good involves the power to produce the opposite extreme, of evil. Tempestuous preaching of half-truths will often set the pulpit to rocking on the billows of popular excitement, and leave it there. Then religious emotions degenerate into religious passions; and, among an uncultured people, religious passions and animal passions lie in close affinity. Such is the testimony of experience.

The natural command of Christian truth over our emotive nature furnishes a principle, therefore, by which to gauge the degree of intellectuality in preaching. The natural counterpoise to emotion is thought. The natural balance to the working of stimulated and complicated feeling is an accumulated and quickened force of the thinking power. Aside altogether from the material of thought, the thinking process is a conservative

process. It tends to keep the emotions in equilibrium. In a moment of sudden and passionate impetuosity of feeling, a self-poised mind instinctively says, "Let me think." The same is the instinct, in a large assembly, of that which we term the common sense. What is common sense? It is the collective mind in equipose. A speaker who would control, and bend to use, a state of paroxysmal emotion in a great audience, urges them to "stop and think." A crowd in a panic is saved, if one of nature's leaders is at hand, who can induce them to stand still, and give the common sense a chance to be heard in calm thinking. Gen. Garfield in New York, on the day of the assassination of President Lincoln, stilled the rage of the surging populace by uttering a great biblical truth, the very words of which subdued passion into thought: "Clouds and darkness are round about him." It was the still voice of God.

This, then, is a regulative principle to the intellectuality of preaching. Proportion it always to the existing state of emotional excitement. The more successfully the pulpit produces its normal effect upon the sensibilities of hearers, the more heavily should it tax their thinking power. In practice this principle will work in two ways. On the one hand, it will forbid merely stimulative appliances to an audience which is already tremulous with excitement; and, on the other hand, it will forbid as imperatively the accumulation of merely intellectual appliances upon an audience which is spiritually dying under its own somnolence.

If the Calvinistic pulpit has committed any radical error in development of its theory of preaching, it has been that of contenting itself with athletic intellectual force in times of spiritual decline. When the heart of a church has fallen asleep, and the ingathering of a

youthful constituency has well-nigh ceased, the phenomenon has been sometimes witnessed, of a ministry straining itself to the utmost in defense and in development of speculative othodoxy, perhaps in hot controversy with skepticism, with no alarms and no pains at the spectacle of a slumbering church and a dying world. That is war upon the fitness of things. It is labor against the natural conditions of success. Preaching on the Westminster Catechism to an audience in which the gray heads are unnaturally numerous is ominous of evil. A mass of spiritually torpid mind ought not to be crowded with the most ponderous intellectual weights from the pulpit above. Such mind needs first the awakening of its emotive nature. That is best achieved by the zealous preaching of a few simple facts of biblical truth. Men in that condition do not need an intellectual uplifting. They need rather to be made to feel the truths they know. A zealous rather than a profound pulpit is the need of the hour.

On the other hand, a mass of spiritually live mind should not be crowded by excessive hortation from the pulpit. Such mind needs the more profound and intricate truths of Christianity. The most simple, direct, emotional preaching should be in times of spiritual decline or of stationary experience; the most elaborate preaching, with only possible exceptions, in times of religious awakening. If men are trembling with passionate excitement, set them to thinking. Give them sermons which they can not understand without thinking. But if men are surfeited with religious knowledge, strong in religious beliefs, and are living calmly on an inherited faith, luxuriating in a history of Christian culture, then probe their sensibilities. Preach to them incisive and trenchant sermons. Preach that

which they can not listen to with calm intellectual assent, and no more. So preach, that heart shall quicken heart. Give them truth under a baptism of fire.

Look, for illustration, at the contrast between the prophetic and the apostolic ideals of preaching. The prophets lived chiefly in decadent periods of the Jewish Church. They were, for the most part, reformers: therefore their preaching was very simple, not original, largely hortatory. A prophetic discourse was often one unbroken roll of thundering denunciation: it was filled with impassioned apostrophe and commination. The apostles, on the contrary, lived in a time of religious awakening. They ministered to a pentecostal age. They addressed the church when "first called Christian," in the fervor of its ardent infancy. Spiritual life was young, buoyant, jubilant, and, if need were, heroic: therefore their preaching was largely upon the most profound and difficult truths of a new religion. Then was the time chosen for laying the foundations of that which time developed into the most elaborate system of theology the world has known. It was one which has given character to the most splendid literatures and philosophies in history.

The theory here illustrated is confirmed by the fact, that, in all subsequent periods, the preaching which has swayed the most powerful awakenings of the church to new forms of religious life, which has probed the sensibilities of men most profoundly, yet has kept them most true to the ideal of a divine life, and most free from crotchets in belief and from fanatical eccentricities, has been of the apostolic type. It has been rich in intellectual resources, doctrinal, argumentative, original. It has been preaching which required thinking in the delivery and in the hearing.

The principle, then, is apt to all times: proportion the intellectual quality of preaching to the state of emotional excitement, and you can not fail to meet, in this respect, the wants of all varieties of spiritual condition. Test the principle by your own observation of the spiritual history of churches and communities. Do you not sometimes see a state of spiritual deadness prolonged and deepened by an excess of intellectual elaboration in the pulpit? Do you not as frequently see a revival of religion diluted and finally checked, if not perverted into fanatic vagaries, by an excess of unthoughtful hortation in the pulpit? When the Infinite Mind is in special converse with the minds of men, then is the time when both preacher and hearer need to summon into service their best intellectual resources. Days of Pentecost demand "great sermons."

4. The intellectual character of preaching should be such as to assist the tendency of popular thought to *systematize* Christian truth. The fact is often overlooked in our study of the conditions of success in preaching, that the human mind craves system in its faith respecting any thing which profoundly concerns it. Any thing which men care enough about to make it the subject of a settled faith, they crave in the forms of systematic faith. In India, where the transmigration of souls is a cardinal doctrine of religion, the treatment of animals is reduced to a most elaborate and reticulated system. Under the Mosaic institutions, personal cleanliness had a profound symbolic meaning. Therefore ablutions of the body were systematized as a part of Jewish theology. Beginning in fragmentary belief, any popular religion tends always to work out for itself a system. It craves self-consistency. It builds on logic. It reaches after truth in link with truth. All prolonged and earnest

thinking on religious themes drifts towards this concinnity of structure. Fluid at first, the popular faith is sure to crystallize.

This craving for system is no peculiarity of educated minds. Illiterate minds, as well, feel the pulsations of it, whether they succeed or not in the eye of theologic science in producing a rounded theologic mechanism. They will struggle after something which they believe to be in a measure rounded and equipoised. The popular mind is restless till it finds something which satisfies this innate longing for a *constructed* faith. Little as the people read systems of divinity, every spiritually quickened mind is naturally a builder of systematic theology. All men make systems if they care enough about religious truth to believe any thing in earnest. Men who think to a purpose do not think in dreams.

This is a condition of the popular mind which the pulpit ought to meet, and to which it ought to render an effective aid. The natural helpers of the people in the work of systematizing their religious knowledge are the pastoral clergy. Yet that is a work which the clergy can not do without a lofty ideal of intellectual preaching. Every pastor of long service among one people should preach in substance a theological system. To do it, he must rise above the humbler range of homiletic effort. Like St. Paul, he must preach things "hard to be understood." Like the apostle at Troas, he must sometimes be "*long* preaching," even to the discomfort of some sleepy hearers like Eutychus. He must deliver many sermons, modeled rather on the Epistle to the Romans than on the Hebrew Psalmody or the Christian Beatitudes. Is not this an obvious half-truth by which a preacher's straining to simplify his pulpit needs to be qualified?

5. The intellectuality of preaching should preserve a certain equality with the intellectual *awakening of the age.* Not only is "milk" fitted to "babes," and "meat" to "men" individually. There are also infantile ages and virile ages. The preaching of the middle ages, when few but clergymen, and only a minority of them, could read and write, must have been a very different thing from the preaching which prevailed at the date of the revival of letters. A general quickening of mind can not but have authority in giving intellectual character to any institution which assumes to be a guide to popular thought. We utter a truism in saying that it will never do for the pulpit to fall behind the times in intellectual force. Rather should it lead the times in religious inquiry. And its right to lead depends on its power to lead. In matters in which the popular mind needs leadership, might is right. An imbecile right to leadership is a contradiction.

The bearing of this principle upon the pulpit of our own age is obvious. Ours is beyond all precedent an age of intellectual awakening. The revival of letters from the fourteenth to the sixteenth centuries was infantile, in the comparison, with the general uplifting of the human mind in all the great nations of our times. Ours is not an age of faith. Indeed, a *general* awakening of national minds never took place before. Intellectual quickenings of former times were restricted to select classes. The Elizabethan age in English letters left the masses of the English people where it found them, — immersed in ignorance and brutality. The creation of such a mind as Shakspeare made less impression on the popular tastes than a bear-baiting at Smithfield. The idea of a popular education and a popular literature is of recent origin; and this for the

very good reason that a reading populace or a reading peasantry is of recent origin.

The fact is a vital one also to the pulpit, that popular religious inquiry does not keep itself on a level with popular faith. Ours is an age of inquiry rather as the antagonist of faith than its auxiliary. It is not an age of still and reverent receptivity towards the pulpit, or any other oracle of belief. The popular attitude towards all oracular teaching is that of an independence which leans over hard upon defiance. "Who are you? Are not we the people?" is the salutation which the popular mind now gives to anybody who assumes to instruct and direct it. Inquiry asserts itself as a protest against beliefs obsolete and obsolescent. Any man who now assumes to be a leader of men works over a furnace in which the elements melt with fervent heat. Elements antagonistic and explosive lie in perilous proximity.

The pulpit of such an age must clearly be an intellectual power, or nothing. What precisely do we mean by this? Not that the pulpit must preach science, philosophy, politics, reform, — the things about which the age is so wide-awake and so polemic; but in its own proper sphere, as an institution of religion, it must be sympathetic with the popular awakening. It must be, and be seen to be, the peer of other intellectual forces of the age. That is an ominous state of things in which the other liberal professions fall out of sympathy with the clergy as an order of cultivated men. That is a capital error in which the province of the pulpit is restricted even to the middle strata of society. The pulpit should know no such thing as social stratum. If none should be deemed too low for its teaching, none should be deemed too high. In its proper sphere it

should be an authority to all. On this lofty table-land it must stand in the popular esteem, or nowhere. Men will not sustain it as an historic monument commemorative of the beliefs of the past. As such, its claim to authority will be scouted as an impertinence.

On a moderate scale, but a very significant one, we have an illustration of this in the decline of the platform among us as a means of religious instruction and inspiration. Time was, when the anniversaries of the great organizations which the American church has made the almoners of her charities were to the religious public what the week of the Passover was to the ancient Hebrews. Some of us have seen a crowd of a thousand and more people standing in the street for an hour at twilight, waiting for the doors to open for a meeting of the American Tract Society. The magnates of the church deemed themselves honored by an invitation to speak upon its platform. Now the entire audiences of four or five such societies in one metropolitan center scarcely exceed a thousand; and the American Tract Society — what is it, and where? I mean no disparagement of that venerable institution. It is doing its ancient work, perhaps, more efficiently than ever. But, in respect to this point of the influence of the religious platform, it participates in the common decadence. The eloquence of the platform in that sort of service is obsolescent. The pulpit will slide down the same plane if it suffers itself to fall below the general level of the age in intellectual force. Its downward momentum will be all the more rapid for the weight of historic prestige which it carries. Napoleon judged men shrewdly when he said, that, in the long-run, the world is ruled by the preponderance of intellectual being, — so much intellect, so much power. Nothing in the divine methods of pro-

cedure exempts religious institutions from the operation of this law.

6. The pulpit should be so administered in respect to intellectual ability *as to command the popular confidence in it as the superior of infidelity.* What does this require of the pastoral clergy? Not that they should incessantly fling the gage of battle to infidelity on the Lord's Day. But in place of that two things are essential.

One is, that, whenever a preacher does attempt to controvert skepticism, he should do it in a masterly way. He must be, and be seen to be, at home in handling its strong points and its latest forms of argument. He must speak as one who has lived through the fascinations of a suspense of faith. On rare occasions he should so preach on the strong points of infidelity as to make the impression that he knows them by heart, and a great deal more. A thorough-bred preacher can present a more imposing array of argument against his own faith than skepticism ever dreamed. From that underground of a faith below faith, he should seem to be able to toss up the batteries of infidelity to the sky. He should make the impression that beneath his own silence there is nothing that he fears.

Yet it is a truism, that no preacher can make this impression without being the master which he assumes to be, nor without putting robust intellectual power into his sermons. Modern infidelity is an intellectual giant in comparison with any thing in the infidel records of the past. It is to the infidelity of history, in many respects, what the Copernican is to the Ptolemaic astronomy. It is learned in resources, shrewd in tactics, well informed in the Christian argument, vigilant of its weak points, self-possessed in assurance, and, withal, morally earnest in spirit. It seeks, and not without

fascinating reasons, to establish the ethics of the Bible without the God of the Bible. He must be a citizen of no mean city who shall cope successfully with such a foe. It is time for the pulpit to cease confounding infidelity with depravity. We should have done with the stories of infidel death-beds. For the purpose for which they are commonly used, all pith has been taken out of them by the testimony of intelligent physicians. As argument for one thing or another, they go for nothing. And an argument which goes for nothing goes for less than nothing: it is a reason for the contrary.

The other thing needed in the equipment of the pulpit for its encounter with infidelity, is, that the average of preaching on other subjects should be of such intellectual force as to suggest the ability of the preacher to cope with infidelity if summoned to the front. The credit of the pulpit with the people depends largely on their faith in what it *can* do. In the majority of congregations there are no infidels. Men abandon public worship before they surrender their inherited beliefs. A preacher, therefore, may not in half a lifetime be driven by the necessities of his people to challenge infidelity to the battle directly. But by indirection he needs to gain the prestige of ability to do it. That prestige he must gain from the average of intellectual force, of learning, and of logical integrity, which becomes visible in his ordinary sermons. A sermon to children may give hints of ability to instruct philosophers. An exposition of the Lord's Prayer to a Bible-class may furnish suggestions of learning sufficient to interpret the first chapter of Genesis to a company of geologists. Though uttering never a word in direct assault upon infidel error, a preacher may legitimately create in his hearers the conviction that he is a man

whom infidels will wisely let alone. The battle is more than half gained in the hands of a chief who obviously can gain it. We do not need to witness the rush of the combatants, and hear the blare of trumpets and the clash of arms, if we can see where the strongest battalions are. The pulpit needs this Napoleonic mastery of the situation.

7. The intellectual dignity of the pulpit should be such as *to enable it to dispense with all varieties of protective authority.* The spirit of our times is indubitable in its drift towards the exclusion of the clergy from every form of protection not inherent in their own character as men and their ability as leaders of men. Never before was the right of leadership thrown back so absolutely upon the power of leadership as now. He will lead who can lead; no other. Not only are the bald forms of union between Church and State obsolete among us, but those social usages, and the silent deference which that union gave birth to, and which once gave to the clerical profession a prestige not awarded to kindred orders, are obsolescent. The pendulum now swings to the opposite extreme. Often a preacher does not receive the deference to which, as a cultured man, he is fairly entitled. Dr. Chalmers, on certain occasions, concealed the badge of his profession.

The last thirty years have witnessed a silent change in one point of clerical prerogative, which, though not of vital moment in itself, is still a very bright straw, significant of the popular drift. I refer to the fact that the clerical guild is no longer the recognized sponsor for its own membership. The time was, and not long ago, when the choice of pastors to vacant pulpits was largely determined by clerical advice. Rarely does any important church submit its action to such counsel now.

The democratic spirit of the Congregational polity is in this respect pervading — shall we say infecting — the usages of more conservative sects. A Presbyterian synod, a Reformed classis, an Episcopal bishop, have not now the prerogative they once had to give to a clergyman rank and employment in the pulpit. Even the Methodist bench of bishops, whose word theoretically assigns to every ecclesiastical inferior his place of service among a silent and acquiescent flock, find their authority often overruled by democratic hints, which they judge it not conducive to the welfare of the church to ignore.

This change has an unmistakable meaning. It is that the pulpit is cut loose from any and every adventitious support. It must stand on its own bottom. The preaching power of the land must pass for what it is. Its prestige with the people is just what itself creates. If it is never less, it certainly is never more. Under such conditions, no pulpit can stand which does not deserve to stand. None can stand which has not such breadth and weight of intellectual resources as to command the respect of a wakeful and thoughtful age. The pulpit must come under the same complications which test the strength of other professions. Humanly speaking, it must take its chances. Think what we may of it, this is one of the fixed conditions of success in the pulpit of the future. Wise men will accept it without revolt. Strong men will face it without alarm. The men who can face it are the men whom the world wants. They are the men to whom it will render that obeisance, which, in the long-run, the inferior must for ever pay to the superior mind. The thing which ought to be will be.

8. The intellectual quality of the pulpit should be

such as to be in close affinity with the *intellectual dignity of the work of the Holy Ghost* in the salvation of men. A chill of repulsion may be felt momentarily from the thought that the Spirit of God is careful for degrees of intellect in his service. Has he not chosen weak things to confound the mighty? Has he not ordained that foolish things shall confound the wise? In the working of an Infinite Mind, where *is* the wisdom of this world? True; but here we have to deal with balanced elements. We destroy an equipose which God never disturbs, if we put asunder the simplicity and the grandeur of God's word. Its transparency and its mystery should be held with even hand.

The fact vital to the present purpose is, that the work of the Holy Spirit, without which the pulpit is but sounding brass, is a work which deals with spiritual immensities. It is a work of Spirit upon spirit. An eternal Spirit broods over an immortal spirit. It has to do with the most profound and unfathomable principles of which the human mind can conceive. Regarded solely in their intellectual reach, as *thoughts* which the mind of man must grasp, and hold close in faith, they are truths which impose silence on the awestruck listener.

Observe this as illustrated in that revolutionary change which takes place in spiritual conversion. The subject of such a transformation comes into possession of great thoughts. They are profoundly disciplinary and creative in their re-action upon mental faculty. They often seem to the believer to open an unexplored world. Astronomers, measuring the orbits of the stars, and laboring to express, in numbers whose very magnitude makes them insignificant, the speed with which light travels, do not have to deal with *thought* so oppres

sive in its grandeur to the human intellect as are those elemental ideas which a human being revolves in that hour of suspended destiny in which he asks and answers the question, "What must I do to be saved?"

A philosopher and a child alike must ask and answer the great inquiry. Each one must ask and answer it in his own moral solitude. There is a converse with God in the process, which calls after it communion with all other infinite and eternal things.

Let us pursue a little farther this line of suggestion by observing the working of the Holy Ghost in the religious quickening of elect nations and races. There we discern on an imperial scale the same creation of great thoughts, and arousing of thinking power. Great religious awakenings and reformations set in motion upheavals of national minds, and put them upon the track of intellectual discovery. Long-buried truths are exhumed. Lost arts are rediscovered. Occult principles of immeasurable reach leap into the light. New ideas which wise men have labored for come suddenly into the possession of the common mind. Thinkers wide apart in point of locality give utterance to them simultaneously. The very air seems full of revelations. Great men are created in resplendent clusters. The hearts of nations throb with the lifeblood set in motion by new ideas. Races elected to great deeds come to the front, and take the lead of the world. Then follows a golden age. Such phenomena attended and succeeded the awakening of Europe at the epoch of the Reformation. Thoughtful men looked on in awestruck silence at the wonder-working of God.

When the Holy Spirit thus wakens nations from the sleep of centuries, he employs, with other instrumentalities, that of the Christian pulpit. Among the great

powers which thus upheave the world are found great preachers. The thoughts which then regenerate the nations are chiefly religious thoughts. Any preacher called of God to the work of such a period steps into an arena crowded to overflowing with quickened intellect. He is the herald of the great truths which agitate men's souls. He handles the great discoveries in which men feel God's nearness. The resultant truth, therefore, to which these reflections tend, is, that, in such alliance with God, a preacher has no right to do a weak or a little thing. He has no right to degrade such truths by his methods of speech. He has no right to give to them the driveling of an indolent mind. On such a theme, for instance, as that of the incarnation, it is an impertinence and an irreverence to preach a feeble sermon. Better silence on such a subject than incompetence. There is a certain dignity of mental process below which the pulpit ought never to fall, because of its alliance with the working of the Holy Ghost. The abortions of sensational preaching, the conceits of clerical mountebanks, the doggerel ditties by which the old songs of the church are parodied, the flummery of "salvation armies," and the pettiness of churchly usages which subordinate the pulpit to the altar, — these are all degrading to the sacred alliance of man with God. The incongruities involved in them are profane.

It matters little to the purpose that some good is done, or appears to be done, by these degradations. We are often quite too lenient and short-sighted in our judgment of wasteful ways of doing a little good. Often we are specially oblivious of the huge offset to the little good by immense and silent damage. To an aeronaut falling from a balloon in mid-air, the suspension

of the law of gravitation would do some good. In a raging conflagration, the elimination of fire from the elements of nature would do some good. In a wreck at sea, the sinking of the Atlantic into the bowels of the earth would do some good. Yet Nature is not, therefore, short-sighted in her wisdom. Gravitation dashes the aeronaut to the earth, fire burns up cities, and wrecks are swallowed in the ocean, as aforetime. The same fixedness of law sways the moral world. There are principles governing the usefulness of preaching which lie deep in the constitution of things. Chaos begins again if they are violated. There are fitnesses of things to things, congruities between antecedents and sequences, which can not be ignored in the policy of the pulpit, without collisions and convulsions in the long-run, and destruction at the last. Evil always outruns good when evil is done for the sake of the good. One of these underlying principles which have the fixedness of laws in the usefulness of the pulpit is that of the congruity of its work in respect of intellectual dignity with the work of the Holy Ghost whose decrees it executes. Like must minister with like, or there is no ministry but catastrophe and ruin. No really great work for eternity is ever done in this world which is not reverent work. When God sends a prophet to the nations, he does not come with noise and tumult, at the head of armies, heralded by blare of trumpet, and beat of drum. He comes with face buried in his mantle, and prostrate on the ground, hearkening for a still small voice.

Such are some of the general principles which should determine the question of the intellectuality of modern preaching. If they seem too general to determine any thing but the drift of a preacher's effort to do the best

that his own intellectual force admits of, this is as specific a result as the question needs. Questions in detail which must arise under it, if answered in the same spirit, can not well lead us astray.

From the views here expressed, several inferences deserve notice. One is, that the intellectuality of preaching must necessarily be variable. Not only must it vary with different ages, but it must be adjusted to the state of different communities. Congregations side by side may differ widely in their receptive power towards the authority of the pulpit. The underlying principles being always the same, their application must obviously vary with those social affinities which have been dominant in gathering the constituents of different churches.

Again: an itinerant pulpit can not be safely accepted as a model in point of intellectual elevation for that of a permanent ministry. In the nature of the case, it is impossible that an itinerant preacher should illustrate the intellectual conditions of success which a stable ministry requires. The Calvinistic ideal of the pulpit demands a studious life, and continuity of service.

For similar reasons, an evangelistic ministry can not be a model for a settled pastor. One of the perils attending the successes of evangelists is, that pastors may be tempted to imitate their fluent and superficial uses of the Scriptures. Nothing could be more unphilosophical. The apparent successes of some illiterate evangelists are a remarkable phenomenon. They are by no means to be ignored by a wise pastor. Valuable hints may be derived from them by an observant and candid looker-on to whom such methods of working may be distasteful. But imagine even the most versatile pastor endeavoring to imitate the methods of the most sensible

evangelist, — his free and easy use of texts, his large proportion of anecdote and biography in the structure of sermons, his unstinted indulgence in autobiography for the sake of giving piquancy to discourse, and his uncouth attempts at dramatic impersonation. The experiment would very soon tell its own story of disgust and defeat.

The very existence of the best forms of evangelistic preaching presupposes repetition of a few discourses to different audiences. Even such an evangelist as Mr. Moody — perhaps the best of his class that our times have witnessed — could not indulge, without satiety to his hearers, in the unstudied effusions which constitute the staple of his discourses, if he had not twenty years of evangelistic labor behind him from which to draw illustrative incidents of a very stimulating sort. So far as the success of his preaching is due to rhetorical expedients, it is attributable to his familiar stories from real life, more than to all other elements combined. Pastors may learn from them such lessons as these, — the value of biographical reading, the ease with which success reduplicates itself with time, and the vast receptive capacity of audiences in listening to the plainest speech, if it be but the speech of a man in earnest. But how long would the resources of even twenty years of such success as his last in a continuous ministry to one audience? The style of preaching most unfit to be imitated by a settled pastor is that of the most effective evangelist. The very elements of discourse which give to an evangelist his power over fleeting assemblies are those which pall most speedily, and finally fall flat, on the tastes of a permanent audience. Homiletic wisdom we must accumulate from the studies of a lifetime: no one man can teach it to us entire by example, and, least of all, a

man, who, by the conditions of his service, can not be a student.

The views we have considered are illustrated and confirmed by the history of the Calvinistic theory of preaching in its practical working. This ideal of a permanent pulpit has always been the most intellectual one in Christendom. It has created the ablest clergy the world has known. It has contributed to literature nearly all the literary standards which have sprung from the pulpit. Everywhere it has found affinity with the most intellectual elements in Christian communities. It has commanded the docile hearing of a larger proportion of *men* than any other ideal of preaching. It has attracted men of the liberal professions and their cultured families. That large class from the middle ranks of society which represents the culture of mind as distinct from the culture of manners has fallen under the teaching of the Calvinistic pulpit more generally than under that of any other. Our pulpit has met the demand of such culture for an educated and stable ministry. It has held for the pulpit the world's respect also in the most cultivated ages of history. It has kept the pulpit from extinction in ages of revolution, when infidelity has flooded the nations. In the most profound and pure revivals of religon it has been dominant, when, without it, the church would have been swept into a maelstrom of fanaticism. And to-day it lives as the most vigorous representative of Christian thought, and one which seems to have the most promising outlook upon the future. So far as any thing of human origin can be confirmed by the divine sanction in history, this Calvinistic theory of a high-toned intellectual pulpit is thus confirmed. It speaks for itself no uncertain sound. A century of disaster could not blot out the record of

what it has been and has done for the redemption of mankind.

To name but a few illustrious examples, mark such a pulpit as that of Calvin at Geneva, that of Knox at Glasgow, that of Edwards at Northampton, that of Chalmers at Edinburgh, that of Finney at Oberlin, and that of Albert Barnes at Philadelphia. These were all of them filled with men of apostolic ardor. The emotional resources of great hearts were there poured out in profusion. Powerful religious awakenings were the fruit of them. Yet not one of them could have been what it was and is to the world, were it not for the thinking powers which were there consecrated. They illustrate magnificently the practicability of combining great hearts with great intellects, deep feeling with deep thinking, intellectual conquest with the baptism of the Holy Ghost. Such union of elements which men would often put asunder constitutes the power which God honors in all signal triumphs of the gospel. In crises of history they are never sundered in the ministrations of the pulpit. In calmer times they never fall into any marked disproportion to each other without disaster; and that disaster is never remedied till the equipoise is restored.

LECTURE XIII.

ENERGY OF STYLE; ITS FOUNDATION.

Is energy of style susceptible of definition? Not otherwise than by the use of its synonyms or by illustrative emblems. Energy is not, as Dr. Campbell defines it, *vivacity* of style. A lamb or a kitten may be vivacious, but neither is a symbol of energy. There is a style which may aptly be called a frisky style, but that is not a vigorous style. Again: energy is not merely the superlative of *perspicuity*, as it seems to have been regarded by Dr. Lindley Murray. Perspicuity underlies energy as it underlies other qualities, but it is not the equivalent of energy. The style of the multiplication-table is clear, but it is not forcible. Light is the emblem of perspicuity: lightning is the emblem of energy.

Further: energy is not merely *impressiveness* of diction. Some writers contend that all eloquence consists in impression. A mathematical demonstration, then, is eloquent in that it produces an effect. An oration of Demosthenes is its kindred in producing impression. Starlight, a lily-of-the-valley, the song of a nightingale, an æolian harp, are all eloquent in the same sense that this quality is attributable to a volcano or an earthquake. Those diversities of diction, therefore, of which these objects are symbols, are all alike. When you have said that they are impressive, you have said all there is to be said of them in the way of definition.

This theory is either a play upon words, or it is a false conception of things. It leaves no room for distinguishing energy from any other kind of impression produced by language. On such a principle you can not distinguish an oration from a song, not even a comic song from an elegy. These words, which have their synonyms in all languages, — energy, strength, force, vigor, — do certainly express an idea not otherwise definable than by interchange of these words. They convey an idea which the common sense of men never confounds with the impressiveness of a mathematical theorem, or that of a bird-of-paradise, or that of the tail of a peacock. These words are ultimate in all languages; so that we can not add to their significance, except by material emblems. We can only say that energy is a peculiar kind of impressiveness: it is the impressiveness of strength as distinct from that of clearness; it is the impressiveness of force as distinct from that of beauty; it is the impressiveness of vigor as distinct from that of vivacity. Leaving it thus undefined, except by interchange of synonyms, we are in no more danger of mistaking it for either of the impressive qualities from which it differs than we are of mistaking an elephant for a humming-bird.

I. The most important suggestions in the discussion of energy of style arrange themselves naturally under several topics, of which the first is the principle that the foundation of a forcible discourse must be laid in the state of the writer's mind in the act of composing.

1. Let it be observed that a forcible writer must have *thoughts* to which forcible expression is appropriate. Energetic expression is not apt to all varieties of thought. A truism this, yet it is often overlooked by preachers. The fact that preaching is always discourse on serious

themes, often induces an oblivion of all other aims of style, except the single one of forcible impression: hence the monotone of solemnity often heard in the pulpit. The chronic straining after force is relieved by no affluence of vocabulary, no versatility of construction, no mobility of expression, because it is not regulated by care to fit expression to thought. When delivery takes on the same monotone, the result is the proverbial droning of the sermon. No other delivery is natural to such a diction. Neither the delivery nor the diction is tolerated anywhere but in the pulpit.

Observe, then, that not all serious thought is the proper subject of energetic expression. Some thoughts as existing in the speaker's mind are too feebly conceived to be naturally put forth with energy. Words can not put on them by authority of the dictionary a quality which is not in them.

Again: unimportant thought, however clear, is not the proper subject of energy of expression. Speakers who ignore this create in their style a gap between expression and thought, which commonly results in bombast. This is only another mode of putting upon a thought a quality which is not in it. You can not speak with energy of an infant's rattle or a tuft of thistledown, without uttering burlesque. Rufus Choate once poured out an impassioned strain of eloquence, in a vocabulary which no other man could equal, in defense of his client's right to a side-saddle. It convulsed the Boston bar with laughter.

Further: some thoughts are important, and as clear as they can be, and yet are not becoming subjects of an energetic utterance. Some thoughts are necessarily *indefinite* in any truthful conception of them by a finite mind. They depend, for all the impressiveness of which

they are susceptible, on a certain degree of vagueness. Define them sharply, and they are no longer true. The immortality of the soul, the eternity of God, divine omnipresence, are examples. All thoughts suggestive of the infinite in time or space must be clouded to finite vision in order to be truthful. They must be felt, if at all, through a remote perspective, — so remote as to create a certain dimness of outline which gives room for the imagination to play. You can not drag them out of their sublime reserve by the mere enginery of style.

Why is it that arithmetical calculations of the length of eternity are always flat, except to a juvenile taste? Inspired taste never attempts that impossible achievement. The Scriptures hint at the expression of multitude by allusion to the stars as a symbol, but even that they never elaborate. The hint is thrown out to the imagination of the reader, and left there. The favorite expedient of the pulpit at one time, for lifting the popular thought to some adequate notion of eternal duration, was to measure it by the number of grains of sand on the seashore, each grain representing an almost inconceivable cycle of years, and the grains being countless in number. You can not expand beyond a very moderate degree the conception of eternity which a mature mind has, by such machinery of description. You only inflate it. You are fortunate if the collapse does not render it ridiculous. It is like measuring the globe of the earth by a soap-bubble.

A French preacher, by practicing a similar arithmetical ingenuity upon his audience, endeavors to illustrate the certainty with which death must swallow up all men in oblivion. He remarks, in substance, taking the hint probably from Saurin, "This audience may number about eighteen hundred souls. Between the ages of ten

and twenty years there may be about five hundred and thirty; between the ages of twenty and thirty years, about six hundred and fifty; between the ages of thirty and forty years, about four hundred and sixty." So he proceeds to classify and count his audience, as if the national census were before him; and then he goes on to say, "According to the national bills of mortality, only twelve hundred and seventy of my hearers will be living in ten years; in twenty years, only eight hundred and thirty." Thus he reckons the prospect of life, as if he were constructing tables for life-insurance; and the conclusion of his elaborate computation is, "So you see, my brethren, that human society is in one continual flux." The flatness of the inference is a caustic satire on the rhetorical method of the discourse. It is as eloquent as a table of logarithms.

Compare the foregoing with a passing hint at the tears of Xerxes at the thought that his army of a million of men would be in the grave in a hundred years. Which of the two is the more impressive? The fact was once affirmed in a sermon, that if the whole past population of the globe had been buried in regular order, side by side, its surface would have been twice covered over with graves. That brief hint at the number of the dead produced a powerful effect so long as the truth of it was unquestioned. But, unfortunately, a hearer of mathematical taste set himself to reckoning the facts geometrically, and found that the highest probable number of the earth's past and present population might have been buried, with room to spare, within the area of Worcester County in Massachusetts. So long as the preacher's statement was believed, however, the hearer's imagination gave to it more than the force of demonstration.

These are specimens of truths which must be left in some indeterminate form, and given over to the hearer's imagination, in order to be forcible. Dwell upon them by an attempt to define them, and the effect is that you flatten them. Milton recognizes this principle in the fact that he makes no attempt to describe minutely the angels who appear in the "Paradise Lost." He leaves them in shadowy outline, in which we see their differences enough to know them apart, and no more. The poet's instinct revealed to him a profound principle of style. The principle is the same with that involved in the philosophical basis of the second commandment of the Decalogue. An idea, which, because of the finiteness of the human mind, must depend on its indefiniteness for its purest and most profound impression, must not be pictured nor carved. Hence arises the failure of modern art to express on canvas the conception of the Deity by the form of an aged and venerable man. Hence, also, the failure of the Romish ritual to express by the crucifix the mystery of the incarnation and atonement. Define such ideas by the sharpness of material forms, and you degrade them to a level with material forms. You compel the mind to part with the only faculty it has by which to approximate the truths involved; that is, it parts with its own imagination. It exchanges the imagination for the eye. It barters a spiritual faculty for a sense.

Moreover, some thoughts not unimportant, and not necessarily indefinite, are still not the proper subjects of energetic expression. Thought in which beauty or pathos is the predominant element does not admit of energy in its utterance. Forceful words and metaphors may be thrust upon it, but do not express it. When President Edwards illustrated the grace of trust by the

emblem of the daisy, he spoke beautifully, impressively but not with strength. Imagine that he had used an oak, instead of a daisy; or, more incongruously still, fancy that he had poured out a volume of vehement words, and piled around his thought martial metaphors; then conceive that he had enforced these with tempestuous elocution, gesturing passionately with the fist instead of the open palm. Would he have expressed the grace of filial trust as well?

This suggests the most common defect, in point of energy, in otherwise good composition. It is that the speaker is not content with a style which fits the thought, but must strain to force into it strength which is foreign to the thought. Be it an earthquake or a summer twilight which is to be represented, it must be clothed with strength, like the neck of the war-horse. Evidently, then, the first thing requisite to a genuine energy of speech is the possession and the mastery of materials which demand energy of speech.

2. In the same line of thought, a second requisite is that one should speak or write *with enthusiasm*. "Logic set on fire" is one of the recorded definitions of eloquence. "Heat is life, and cold is death," says a living scientist. The absence of the element of heat in all things tends to stagnation. A preacher may be an enthusiast in temperament, yet not in work. One may be uplifted by emotional fervor in the abstract contemplation of the work, yet not in the discussion of the present theme. One may be inspired by a present theme as a subject of meditation, yet not inspired by it as a subject of discourse. One may be eloquent on the present subject to some audiences, yet not eloquent in discourse to a present audience. Enthusiasm of communication on a present theme to present hearers is the power of movement in public speech.

The history of the pulpit has often illustrated the fact that some men who think passionately can not preach passionately. Some who extemporize with fire can not write with fire. All conditions must be favorable to the generation and the emission of heat in order to secure the superlative force in expression. It is an invaluable mental habit, therefore, to picture an audience in the solitude of one's study. This gives reality to the written sermon as nothing else can. It makes a living thing of it: it turns soliloquy into discourse — two things which are very unlike, and which characterize two very dissimilar styles of preaching.

Nothing else can take the place, or do the work, of this force of feeling. Energy and enthusiasm co-exist in character: they must co-exist in style. Scientists tell us, that the force of the pulsations of a human heart is measured by the weight of tons in twenty-four hours. If all the beats of your heart in one day of time could be concentrated into one huge throb of vital power, it would suffice to throw a ton of iron a hundred and twenty feet into the air. A fitting symbol is this of the spiritual power which a human mind may put forth in its great moods of inspired emotion. Faith then hurls the mountain into the sea. One reason, the chief reason, why some preachers exhibit power on great occasions only, is that their emotive nature is roused by great occasions only. It is this energy of passion which renders the prophetic style of the Scriptures so perfect a specimen of strength in discourse. The inspired mind was inundated by the torrent of its emotions.

It deserves remark, that, in this respect, oratorical art coincides in its requirements with the most profound religious culture. Observe how each confirms the other

Art affirms, that, to speak forcibly, a man must speak with soul on fire. Therefore a preacher must preach that which is his own by the right of profound experience. But, to preach such experience, he must possess it; and, to possess it, he must *be* a man of God. Religious culture can speak no otherwise, and can go no farther. The conscience of the man and the instinct of the orator proclaim the same thing. If St. Paul had been inspired to teach homiletics upon the pure principles of rhetorical art as illustrated in Demosthenean eloquence, he must have said precisely what he did say as an apostle of Christianity, "Though I speak with the tongue of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass."

I beg you to note such points of kindred between the religious culture of the man and the professional culture of the orator. Both lay the same injunction on a preacher. Some religious minds do not recognize this; and such minds have a way of expressing their pious emotions at the expense of the oratorical instinct, which creates an unnatural antagonism between the two. Religion can no more afford this than eloquence can. It is one variety of that violence to nature which Dr. Arnold had in mind, when he said, "I fear the approach of a greater struggle between good and evil than the world has yet seen, in which will happen the greatest trial to the faith of good men that can be imagined, if the greatest talent and ability are on the side of their adversaries, and they have nothing but faith and holiness to oppose to them." A preacher should never suffer his own mind, in any thing even the most trivial, to fall under the tyranny of a secret antagonism between conscience and intellect. No servitude is more degrading or more hopeless.

3. The materials to which energy of expression is apt, being in posesssion, and these being projected in the style by the force of personal enthusiasm in the preacher, energy requires still further, that, in the act of composing, he shall write or speak *with an immediate object in view.*

Oral discourse is sometimes soliloquy in its nature. If not such as a whole, it often is such in unwary passages. It may degenerate even into revery, or rise on the wing into rhapsody. Then, the speaker is only thinking aloud. The whole power of his discourse is expended on himself. No audience is pictured in his imagination: therefore no projecting force aims the discourse at an object outside of his own being. Such preaching can not appear supremely forcible to hearers. To them it can appear to be only what it is. This defect exists in the experience of the pulpit in great variety of degree, from that of indirectness only, to that of downright inanity of diction. More frequently than otherwise it is found in fragments of the sermon in which the preacher has momentarily written without a tense aim. Sometimes, however, it is the chief characteristic of a juvenile production.

In the Church of St. Mark, in Venice, a traveler observes a collection of mosaics and columns which in themselves are of great beauty, some of them of untold value. They are trophies of ancient Venetian victories. But the spectator can not help asking, "What have these things to do here? This column which supports nothing — why is it here? This mosaic of a battle-scene — what is the pertinence of it in a Christian church? This fragment from a Turkish mosque architecturally has nothing to do — what is the meaning of it in a place of Christian worship? This Ionic pillar

from the Acropolis of Athens stands upright, with nothing above it which gives a reason for its location — why is it here in the Church of St. Mark?" Incongruity of association offsets one's admiration of these relics of Venetian history, simply because one discovers no object which they can serve in keeping with the place.

A juvenile discourse is often of similar character, filled here and there with irrelevances, indirectnesses, objectless paragraphs, impertinent illustrations, things interpolated for their own sake, allusions from afar thrust in for the speaker's delectation, but which to the hearer are unimpressive, because void of any meaning which concerns *him*. Such discourse is apt to appear to a hearer indolent. Its movement is laggard. Time hangs heavy in listening to it. A short sermon thus constructed is tedious, and a long one intolerable. This must be so, for the reason that the hearer is not sensible of being made the object of the sermon. Least of all does the discourse create the sense of its having been created for him, and predestined to reach him.

On the contrary, discourse which has an object — a palpable object, an immediate object, an urgent object, an object incessantly present to the speaker's thought, to which he hastens on for the hearer's sake — is sure to be in some degree energetic discourse. Why does everybody spring at a cry of "Fire"? For the same reason, direct preachers are almost always energetic preachers. Serious defects are often sustained by this one excellence. It is one of the chief sources of the vigor of St. Paul's Epistles. Longinus calls the style of St. Paul the "anapodeictic" style, that is, the style, not of one in search of, but of one in possession of, truth, and using it eagerly for an object.

This anapodeictic style has been illustrated in the discourses of all the great preachers who have been leaders in great awakenings of the popular conscience. Savonarola, Wickliffe, Latimer, Luther, Calvin, Knox, Edwards, Finney, — all gave superlative examples of it. Those now living who have listened to the last of these great historic preachers recall nothing else so characteristic of him as that he never preached a sermon, or a fragment of one, without an object, — an exigent object, a present object, an object made as luminous to the hearer as to the preacher, and an object which concerned the hearers more than all the world besides. This was the one overpowering impression of his discourses. The style of them was like a concave speculum, which concentrated all rays of light upon one point, to illuminate that point, to make that point glow till the eye was blinded if it looked away. Yet this was done calmly. Few preachers have depended so little upon external drapery, and so much on pure thought. Few made so little ado in the conquest of a hearer's convictions. His sermons were solid thought, packed in solid language, and built around a listener, so that he could not get out and away from it, with either a quiet conscience or an honest intellect.

EXCURSUS.

The importance of this element of directness in preaching gives pertinence to an *excursus* at this point, on the inquiry, What is the groundwork of this marvelous power of direct and solid thought in sermons? It lies in a very simple principle, which, because of its simplicity, we are apt to overlook. It is the *individuality* of moral influence. Strictly speaking, moral influence never moves men in the mass. It reaches first the indi-

vidual man, each one in his singleness. The response to it is an individual experience. The depth of it is proportioned to the sense of moral solitude awakened by it. "Alone with God! alone with God!" this is the interior and unutterable sense awakened by the most powerful preaching. The sum total of such power is nothing but the aggregate of such individual contributions.

Moral influence, also, is individual in the fact that it penetrates individual souls more profoundly than it can penetrate society as such. Social changes are relatively superficial changes. They are hints of a "lower deep" in the inarticulate experience of the individual. Every man has strata of being which social relations do not bring to the surface. Each one knows his own, but only in an unbroken solitude. Each lives them, but never communicates them, and never can. Only results of them, and those not the most profound, come to the upper air in the form of sympathies. The soul and God are the only two beings in the universe who know what the man is in that inner and silent consciousness.

Yet preaching aims chiefly at those depths of individual being in which the soul is alone with God. True preaching should have a profoundness of reach which in one sense imitates the work of the Holy Ghost in regeneration. It achieves nothing worthy of the pulpit, if it fails of that singleness and depth of individual aim. We talk grandly, often, of reaching the "public" from the pulpit. But, to a preacher of apostolic reach, the public as such is nothing. His aim is at the individuals who compose the public. Do not be deceived by the glamour of reputation with the public. It counts for nothing except as it represents grasp upon individual hearts. The decline of pastoral toil in deference to

what are dignified as public labors is a woful loss to the spiritual power of the pulpit.

Said one of these mistaken pastors, "I can not visit my people. I am a public man: my public duties leave me no time and no force for private intercourse with individuals." Doubtless he believed it. He may have thanked God that he was not as other men in the humbler walks of ministerial service. But what was he doing as a public man? He was lecturing to lyceums; he was debating in conventions for the extension of suffrage; he was writing articles for newspapers, on life-insurance, on domestic architecture, on heating houses by steam conveyed underground, and doing a thousand and one things, many of which had not even a collateral connection with the proper business of his life. Was he a busy man? Yes: he never had an idle hour. His life was a rush. Was he a busy *minister?* No: the great majority of his hours were idle hours. His pulpit suffered in depth and singleness of aim, and therefore in spirituality of result, by that substitution of reputation with the public for power with individual souls. In the extreme of this error we find a minister given over of God to the breeding of horses. "Should a wise man fill his belly with the east wind?"

This modern twist in the policy of the pulpit, by which it is made the servitor to countless matters of civilization only, and by which civilization supplants redemption, is a fearful one in its possible bearings on the church of the future.

Dr. Chalmers never hit the target in the eye more deftly than when he said on a topic kindred to the one before us, "The public is a big baby." Accordingly, he never felt that his most vital work as a minister of Christ was in any thing which gave evidence by visible

signs of having caught the popular breeze, and of bandying his own name back and forth in the gossip of the hour. He loved, rather, to seek out individuals in "Burke's Close," in the West Port of Edinburgh. There he found the work which he revered. The platform was nothing to him except as he could make it tributary to the regeneration of "Burke's Close." There he could feel the roots of all other success.

Returning, now, to the topic which has led us to this digression, I remark that forceful preaching has always a quality which claims and exercises this right of way to individual souls. We feebly call it directness. It grows out of the vision of a distinct, a single, an immediate, an urgent object. It concentrates power upon the one hearer. Oftener than otherwise, it expresses itself in the consciousness of the preacher by his literally addressing a sermon to one man. The sermon reaches a class by reaching the one man for whom it has been constructed and to whom it is delivered. Any discourse prepared in the light of such vision must have some power. Our minds are so made that we can not help feeling the tenseness of the preacher's aim. It communicates itself to his style by peculiarities which we can not always define, but which we always feel. We may not believe the discourse; but the preacher believes it, and we believe in *him*. Therefore, for the time, we can not but feel the magnetism of his concentrativeness. We tremble in sympathy with the arrow which is eager for its mark.

One of the most profound criticisms ever made upon a sermon was made by a plain, blunt man upon a discourse which to some appeared elaborate, finished, faultless. It was not faultless; it was not finished as

a sermon; it was not even elaborate. And the blunt, plain man disclosed its radical defect in one breath by remarking, "Very good; yes, *very* good — but what then? What of it? I did not feel that it hit me: did you feel that it hit you?" A volume of homiletic wisdom was compressed in those words. That is a poor sermon, and, if designed for a sermon, it is as poor a specimen of literature as of any thing else, of which the hearer's conscience can honestly say, "Very good but what of it?"

LECTURE XIV.

ENERGY OF STYLE; FOUNDED IN SELF-POSSESSION.

VIGOROUS materials, enthusiasm in composing, and an immediate object in view, will not of necessity and always secure the supremely forcible expression. One other element is requisite. It is, that, in the act of composing, a preacher *should be self-possessed.* A French critic says that eloquence is not delirium. Carlyle adds, "We do not call a man strong who has convulsions, though in the fit ten men can not hold him." For superlative force in style a man must be master of his subject, his audience, his occasion. He must not permit them to be master of him. Enthusiasm must be so under control as to be susceptible of use at the speaker's will.

Shakspeare had in mind the element of oratory corresponding to this when he said, "In the very torrent and tempest, and, as I may say, whirlwind, of his passion, he must acquire and beget a *temperance* that may give it smoothness." Fury in speech is not energy. Observe the difference. It marks the line between certain common defects and excellences in preaching; and it suggests, also, the factitiousness of certain popular cravings by which the pulpit is beset.

Mark, then, that uncontrolled enthusiasm is founded on a partial mastery of thought. It is necessarily one-sided. So far, it is ignorant. Absolute mastery of a

truth never puts a man out of reason. By seeing a truth all around, we see it as modified by other truths. We see it as balanced by its opposites. The loss of a balanced mind is always the loss of something true. Therefore unbalanced enthusiasm leads to false assertions in style. It prompts to inconsiderate superlatives. Qualifications are ignored. Metaphor ceases to be auxiliary to truth: it becomes intemperance of speech. An intemperate style thus formed invites and is aggravated by an intemperate delivery. The utterance of such a style demands vociferous tones. A severity of countenance approaching to a scowl is becoming to it. Gesture with the fist becomes instinctive in place of gesture with the open palm. The entire physical magnetism of the speaker is perverted to exaggerated and repellent uses.

A passionate style, therefore, tends always to defeat itself. Like any thing else that is overwrought, it invites re-action. It disgusts, it shocks, it wearies, it amuses, according to the mood of the hearer. Practically it is weakness, not strength. Why is it that we are often inclined to laugh at an angry man? Shrewd politicians understand that one way to defeat an opponent is to fret his good nature, and let him defeat himself. Make a man furious in debate, and you make him harmless. Entice a man into a duel, and he is politically dead, whether the bullet reaches him or not.

Daniel Webster in middle life was a model of self-possession, and therefore of power. His habit was to restrain himself under the provocations of debate; never to be tempted by them into petty skirmishes with opponents; to wait till the great principles involved could be reached, and then to handle them, rather than the men who denied them. In his old age he lost prestige

in this respect, and with a corresponding loss of power. The English Parliament used to laugh at Edmund Burke's most solemn adjurations, because they exceeded the dignity of self-collected speech. Lord Brougham was more frequently defeated by his own petulance than by the argument of his opponents.

One of the most remarkable examples of intemperate style among modern essayists is that of De Quincey. His is a most fascinating style to young writers; excellent, therefore, for the purpose of mental quickening. But you will find that it will not wear well to your maturer tastes, and that its most serious defect is its want of the dignity of self-possession. The following will illustrate my meaning: "Any man of sound sense might take up the whole academy of modern economists, and throttle them between heaven and earth with his finger and thumb, or bray their fungous heads to powder with a lady's fan." Again: he writes of "a dilemma, the first horn of which would be sufficient to toss and gore any column of patient readers, though drawn up sixteen deep." Fortunate is it for the future of the English language that he did not tax it with a description of the other horn. Yet you will observe that no personal ill-will is expressed in these invectives, no anger, no petulance, no malign hostility. The strain of the style is jocose rather. Still it is intoxicated style. It is a reckless threshing of language, in which you lose the sober thought in its sober truthfulness, and are only astounded at the words.

EXCURSUS.

The chief use of the criticisms now before us for the service of the pulpit is to put us on guard against *ascetic* and *vindictive* preaching. At no other point in the

series of homiletic discussions which are to come before us, can I more naturally treat than here the preaching of the doctrine of retribution. Let me ask you, then, to note, in the form of *excursus* from the topic immediately in hand, some thoughts on the weakness of intemperate strength in certain methods of discourse upon eternal punishment.

1. Observe, first, that descriptions of the condition of lost souls are powerless for good if they result in the painting of savage pictures. One of Titian's rules of coloring was, that only a small part of the canvas should ever be in deep shade, no matter how somber the subject. Even in the engraving of a death-scene, the major-part should be in light shading, or, at most, in mezzotint. The same is true of the painting of despair by speech. Excess of gloom may blur all impression. The denunciatory language of the Scriptures may be so used as to be weak in proportion to its severity. Ringing changes upon the biblical words "hell," "damnation," "eternal death," "everlasting punishment," may be devoid of the biblical energy through mere dislocation. Expanding in order to intensify the biblical emblems of perdition, such as "fire," "hell-fire," "brimstone," "lake of fire," "the worm that dieth not," may be so executed as to express fury, not energy. For salutary impression it may be the most useless of all discourse.

2. The early English pulpit needs to be studied with precaution, because it was so generally infected with this error. Even Jeremy Taylor, whose sense of beauty was often a solvent of images of terror, yet was often overborne, by his imaginings of a lost state, into representations which seem to our modern taste brutal. They are impressive only as theatrical illusions. The moral and

the sensuous elements in them are in inverse proportions to each other. M. Angelo's painting of the Last Judgment indicates that the English pulpit of Jeremy Taylor's time had inherited this sensuous taste from preceding ages. That painting leaves on the mind of the spectator, as its ultimate impression, a densely packed mass of human limbs and faces in all conceivable varieties of physical contortion. Its hideous anatomy is its most marvelous characteristic. As a painting, it may deserve the enthusiasm of artists; but, as a spiritual expression, it is neither forcible nor true. Yet such was the taste in which the English pulpit of the subsequent century was trained.

An example of some of the best preaching of our English fathers in this respect, I find in the sermons of one Henry Smith, who bore the title of "Lecturer at Clement St. Dane's," and was contemporary with Jeremy Taylor. His theme is the "Woe of Eternal Remorse." He discourses thus: "Who can express that man's horror but himself? Sorrows are met in his soul at a feast. Fear, thought, and anguish divide his soul between them. All the furies of hell leap upon his heart as upon a stage. Thought calls to fear; and fear whistleth to horror; and horror beckoneth to despair, and saith, 'Come and help me to torment this sinner.' One saith that she cometh from this sin; another saith that she cometh from that sin: so he goeth through a thousand deaths, and can not die." We may admire this as an antique specimen of art: it may have had value in its day. But would a modern copy of it in an American pulpit be even a curiosity? Would it not start anew the discussion of a second probation?

Another example is selected from a sermon by Bishop Latimer. He often preached literally "with a ven-

geance." The following occurs near the close of one of his discourses: "Will ye have Jesus Christ? What say ye? Speak now — now or never. See, sinners! I offer you the Lord. Will you accept him? Ah, poor Christ! Must he go a-begging? Out, ye hard-hearted! What will Christ say when he comes to judge you? I'll tell you what he'll do. He will bind you in bundles, and burn you. He will say, 'Here is a bundle of drunkards: Devil, take them. Here is a bundle of liars: Devil, take them.'"

We must not scorn this as a piece of scenic display. Men who go to the stake for their faith do not sport with it in theatrical illusions. Such preaching may not have been powerless in rude times, and among a people who were familiar with the strolling theaters of England. That was a scenic age. Theatrical entertainments were one method of intellectual teaching. The very grotesqueness of the picture drawn by Latimer may not have aroused then the sense of the ludicrous. To a rude taste the grotesque heightens the terrific. Some of the most vivid scenes in Dante and in Milton are at first only repulsive; but an infusion of the unnatural into other elements of descriptive painting intensifies the impression of the whole as a work of art. By a people of a ruder age, art in the pulpit may not have been detected as such, and criticised unfavorably. Latimer may therefore have produced a powerful impression. We must suppose this, to account for the fact that the authorities feared him, and the people obeyed him. The world does not burn imbeciles for their opinions. But is it difficult to imagine how a modern imitation of Latimer's appeal would be received by an American audience?

Have you not listened to sermons on retribution, not

so graphic as this sketch from Latimer, which impressed you as merciless? Have you not heard comminatory preaching which was sheer declamation? You could not believe that the preacher had any real appreciation of the truth he proclaimed. He fumed and stormed and roared, because he had no adequate, or even inadequate, conception of the infinite fact he was uttering. I hope there is less of such preaching now than formerly. I have never heard it from an educated preacher. If you have heard it, was it effective? Did you feel it? Did others seem to feel it? I doubt even the indurating effect of such discourses. Men are not hardened by that which they do not feel at all. I have seen men sleeping under such sermons as soundly as they ever did in their cradles. I have seen young people flirting, and children playing bo-peep, while such discourse was in progress; and they were at least *as* usefully employed as the preacher, for I never saw an audience religiously moved by such preaching. It was "sound and fury, signifying nothing."

3. The most vital human element in the preaching of retribution is the calmness of suppressed emotion. Force in reserve, suggesting, not parading, itself, is the true power of such discourse. This mental self-possession should be expressed in both style and manner. Such a mental state is the inevitable result of the moral emotions which are becoming to the preaching of that doctrine. What are those emotions? Obviously they are balanced opposites. Confidence in the evidences of retribution, awe at the fact of retribution, complacency in the justice of retribution, compassion for the soul in peril of retribution, and adoration of God in the infliction of retribution, — these are the central moral exercises which should characterize the preaching of the

doctrine. Co-existing, they must qualify and limit each other. They must produce a self-constrained sense of the reality which can not express itself ferociously any more than it can do so flippantly. A savage style is impossible to a preacher who has such a conception of the doctrine as that represented in the vision of St. John in the Revelation. A tempestuous delivery, also, is inconceivable under such conditions.

4. To no other doctrine is *elocution* so vital as to that of eternal punishment. It should never be vociferated: still less should it be delivered theatrically. Its delivery should be the expression of an awestruck and broken spirit. It should be preached as one would talk it in private to one's dearest friend. In its best forms it is not premeditated. It is the involuntary outpouring of a full soul. "My heart shall cry out for Moab," says Isaiah, at the height of prophetic denunciation. The comminatory style of prophecy is often restrained by such refluent waves of sympathy with the doomed ones. So should all retributive preaching be relieved by outbreaks of personal compassion from the heart of the preacher. This will inevitably fuse the hardness, and soften the belligerence, of the delivery. Never should the pulpit seem to be the throne of an avenging angel.

The force of comminatory preaching should be the *still* force. The calm, tense nerve of William Tell in aiming at the apple on the head of his son is a symbol of the energy which should send the arrow of such preaching quivering to its mark. The self-possession of the pilot who sat down with the weight of his own life on the safety-valve, as his only hope of holding his vessel off the breakers, is an emblem of the suppressed and awestruck power with which we should proclaim

the damnation of souls. Such *will* be the manner of preachers who really feel their own words in disclosing an eternal hell. The consciousness of personal concern with the truth he utters will press the preacher's soul down to the verge of awestruck silence, which nothing but the command of God would induce him to break.

There is something profoundly symbolic of a great preacher in the reluctance of Moses to speak at all as the leader of God's people. That was indicative of a great heart. He had overwhelming conceptions of truth. His faith had seen God in the burning bush. To his inmost soul God was a consuming fire. Such should be the mental habit of one who would preach an eternal retribution. How can such as he speak such a truth, otherwise than in low and gentle tones? How can he rant about it? How can he gabble it to men who are no more exposed to it than himself? He must proclaim it, if at all, with the sympathy of a fellow-sinner breathing in his words, and thrilling in his tremulous hands, and modulating his tones, and melting in his eye. By no other manner can he represent Baxter's model of "a dying man speaking to dying men."

No other than this still preaching of retribution is ever really felt by an audience. Vociferation on such a subject does not move men: declamation does not. The manner which approaches most nearly to no manner at all is the one to which men open their hearts. Hearers may be nervously stimulated by ranting commination. So they may be by a drum. But even that they cease to feel when its novelty is gone. When that excitement subsides, declamation of retributive woe ceases to be even interesting. It has never gone deeper than the tympanum of the ear. Men sleep under it as under the fall of a mill-stream. Wide-awake men

deride it: it becomes the butt of scoffers, as it deserves to be; for there is nothing in it which is either godlike or humane.

5. The still elocution is the one which we instinctively associate with the comminatory preaching of Christ. From no other lips have ever proceeded such revelations of eternal woe as those of the Man of Sorrows. His is the model of retributive discourse for all ages. It is the "wrath of the Lamb" which we are commissioned to preach. Yet who thinks of Him as a stentorian preacher? Who imagines him as a declaimer in the twenty-third chapter of St. Matthew? Well do painters represent him as gesturing with the open palm, or with the monitory finger pointing skyward. Is there in the galleries of Italy a solitary picture in which he appears gesturing with the fist? Who believes that he ever pounded the desk, if he had one in the synagogues of Judæa? or that he stamped his foot in divine anger, or wriggled his shoulders, or rivaled the bulls of Bashan in his intonations? To him we owe the most terrific emblems of eternal woe ever put into human speech. But who conceives of him as dwelling on those emblems, as if he reveled in them? Who ever dreams of him as mouthing them with theatrical emphasis? Do we not think rather of his low and solemn tones, his sitting posture, his stooping form, his still or tremulous hands, his melting eye, and the nameless ways in which the wail of agonized expression would call to its aid every feature and member of the worn body in bearing his message of doom to the doomed ones? Every word of denunciation that he ever uttered brings with it to our ears the echo of his lamentation over Jerusalem. Such is all genuine preaching of retribution. Thus men always preach it when they are in earnest. The more

nearly it resembles the gentleness of our Lord, the more profoundly do men feel it, and say of it, "Never man spake like this man."

EXCURSUS.

At this point our discussion naturally opens the way to a collateral question, which the drift of opinion, and the taste of the age, obtrude upon our attention. Let us consider, in the form of a second *excursus* from the topic in hand, the inquiry, Ought the biblical *emblems* of eternal punishment to be employed by the modern pulpit? Three facts seem conclusive in answer.

1. One is, that we have no evidence that any thing else than those emblems can express so truthfully to embodied mind the facts of retributive experience in eternity.

Modern ideas of the range of a physical resurrection have suffered some damage. We often restrict it to the future of the redeemed. That the bodies of the lost are also raised is dropped out of the conception often entertained of their immortality. Must not this be regarded as one of the devices by which the human mind evades the vividness of unwelcome truth? It is natural to close our eyes to a flash of lightning. So do we instinctively welcome any eyelid which shall help us to blink the reality of everlasting pains. We spiritualize them. We wrap them in philosophic thought. Say what we may of this process as designed to intensify our conception, it produces no such effect on the majority of minds. Even to the best of us in our average moods, that which we feel at the ends of our fingers is more real to us than an abstract thought. Is not a grain of sand in your eyeball more profoundly real to you than the transit of Venus? So, by remanding our

thought of retribution to the realm of mind alone, we in fact please ourselves with the dignity of our theology at the expense of its reality.

We have no warrant for this restricted acceptance of a bodily resurrection. If the bodies of the righteous are to live again, analogy, as well as revelation, should lead us to believe the same of the bodies of the wicked. Both are to be "clothed upon." Where, then, is the hope of deliverance for the wicked from that law of the divine government by which the body symbolizes in its experience the moral condition of its spiritual habitant? The drift of sin is to physical suffering. Moral depravity tends always to a corrupt and tortured body. Certain diseases are the product of certain crimes. The whole catalogue of human pains, from a toothache to *angina pectoris*, is but a witness to a state of sin expressed by an experience of suffering.

Carry this law into the experience of eternal sin, and what have we? A spiritual body, reduplicated, it may be, in its capacities for suffering, yet inhabited and used, and therefore tortured by a guilty soul; a body perfected, it may be, in its sensibilities, inclosing and expressing a soul matured in its depravity. By all the analogies we know of touching the relations of body to spirit, what else than the scriptural emblems of retribution can express, even to the utmost stretch of our imagination, the facts of a state of eternal guilt?

2. Again: it is a fallacy that the modern mind does not need the physical symbols of retribution to impress the fact. Some things the world can not outgrow. Among these is the dependence of embodied mind on pictorial representations of spiritual truth. Even if culture does relieve a fragment of the race from some forms of this dependence, it has no such effect on the

vast majority of mankind. They remain, as all ages have found them, wedded to material images of unseen things. Why is it that we shrink from such images of eternal pain? Is it for any other reason than that they *do* brand the facts upon our *vision* as no other device of expression can? The majority of men are children in their love of pictures. Why are pictorial newspapers regarded as an advance of triumphant journalism?

It is not true that culture changes essentially this dependence of mind on sight for its most vivid conceptions of truth. Said a judge of the Supreme Court of the United States, in a critique on the American pulpit, "I want abstract truth pictured to my eye." Culture and rudeness alike crave the emblem. A sight of the cathedral at Cologne for five minutes gave to Sir Christopher Wren a conception of architecture which a lifetime of theoretic study could not have created. The most gifted minds are not in this respect essentially different from yours or mine. A sailor before the mast is their equal and ours in his dependence on a sight of the Bay of Naples for his most truthful conception of marine beauty. We all crave the teaching of the eye. Have we not some conceptions which we never had before the stereoscope was invented?

Many of the retributive devices of human law are founded on this dependence of the human mind on physical impressions of spiritual ideas. Capital punishment can not be vindicated on other grounds. It is a scenic exhibition of human justice. On the same ground, an English judge has recently advocated the restoration of the scourge as a penal instrument for certain crimes; not because other punishments are not commensurate with their guilt, but because other punishments make no adequate moral impression on the

senses of the criminal, or on the imagination of other men. He contends that wife-murder can not be extirpated from England by other means.

This relation of spiritual ideas to the physical expressions of them lies very deep in all retributive government. The world has not outgrown it, and never can. It is one of the ingrained laws of embodied mind. Hence the biblical emblems of eternal woe can never be spared from the resources of the pulpit. The last age of the world will need them as profoundly as the first. They may be abused: they often are abused in ways for which there is no decent authority, divine or human. The literature of the pulpit contains in this respect specimens which are worthy only of savages. But these emblems can not on this account be wisely disused. The desire of the pulpit and the demand of the pew for their disuse are alike evidences of an insurrection of the human heart against the truth which they express. We lean to an abandonment of the symbol, because our effeminate faith revolts from the thing.

3. We have no evidence that the scriptural emblems of retribution were originated for transient use only. They bear no signs of a temporary purpose. They were not peculiarities of an ancient dispensation. They reached their most lurid grandeur, not under Jewish, but under Christian teaching. No inspired hint is given, that they are destined to outlive their usefulness. They resemble nearly all the personal utterances of our Lord in the fact that they have the look of *ultimate* revelations.

The most significant fact about these emblems is their authorship. The believing world is awed by the fact that they were uttered by *Him*. No other threatenings of future woe in the Scriptures equal these coals of fire

from his lips. It seems as if, for some occult design, all other inspired oracles held back, and spoke with half-suppressed voices, that the most overwhelming denunciations of the wrath of God might break upon the world with his authority. Was there not such a design? Was there not a far-seeing purpose in this obeisance of all other inspiration on this theme to his? Does it not look like a foresight of the rebellion of the human heart through coming ages against the truth which these emblems portray. Does it not look as if God meant thus to forestall and to silence, through all time, the insurgent clamors of mankind to be eased from the pressure of that truth upon the conscience?

If God intended that this doctrine should die out in the ultimate stages of human faith, should we not expect to find some intimations of that intent in the teachings of Christ? If he meant, in some golden age of the future, to lift the world to a high table-land of refinement, on which the lurid gleams of hell could be safely put out like a spent-fire which has done its work, and is no longer needed, should we not reasonably look for premonitory hints of that purpose in the personal revelations of our Lord? Where should we look for some recondite foregleams of that latest glory, if not to the dying confidences of the Master with his disciples? In his teachings on other subjects we do find such seed-thoughts, prophetic of truth to be revealed. We find principles which are ultimate. We find finished forms of truth, beyond which the world's wisdom can go no farther, but which lay all coming ages under tribute. We find oracles which seem to bend forward, and wait for the coming generations, ready and eager to respond to their last inquiries. We find elemental maxims, "hard sayings" in the time of their utterance, which

lay dormant for centuries, apparently because they were designed for final uses in the world's maturity. We find a Being whose very life was a future, and whose person was a prophecy.

It is in the very midst of such a galaxy of truths that we find these supreme disclosures of the eternal wrath of God. How, but in one way, can we interpret this? How, but to one purpose, can we understand the fact that our Lord says not one syllable, from first to last, which softens the retributive teachings of the elder Scriptures? He retracts not one word, dilutes not one threatening, abrogates not one penal sanction, eases not one pang of coming retribution, and never hints that the benignity of God requires any such relaxing of eternal justice. More than this: it is *He* who intensifies all previous disclosures of the penalties of sin. It is *He* who unrolls on lurid canvas these appalling pictures of the judgment and the after-world of despair. It is *He* who exhausts the forces of human speech on this theme, so that all later wisdom stands dumb. What else can this mean than that God intended in the very person of Christ to confront, in advance, the drift of the human heart on this subject, and to tone up the world's faith to God's own thought of retribution?

LECTURE XV.

PREACHING THE DOCTRINE OF SIN.—MEANS OF ENERGY COMMON TO LITERAL AND FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE.

ENERGY of style as affected by self-possession in the act of composing leads us to consider, at some risk of too remote digression, a third *excursus*, on the danger of convulsive strength in preaching on the *doctrine of sin*. The following varieties of this defect deserve attention: —

1. The theory of depravity is often intemperately expressed, to the detriment of a sense of its reality in the mind of the hearer. This is a theme on which more depends on rhetorical form than on scientific exactness of statement. The theory of inherited guilt, for instance, so long as it is restricted to scholastic forms of statement, may do no harm, because it is not taken in by the hearer, and felt to be a reality. But let that theory be projected vividly in the style by the ordinary means of forcible expression, and it becomes impotent for any purpose of salutary impression, because it produces revolt of the common sense of men. Nobody believes it, and nobody can.

2. Denunciations of organized forms of sin are often weak through intemperate energy. The world has yet much to learn of the philosophy of reform. On the subject of human servitude, for instance, it is not the unmitigated and reckless tone of rebuke commonly adopted by professional reformers which achieves suc-

cess. It has not been so in our own history. The national conscience never responded to the diatribes which were the chief utterances of the "abolitionists," technically so called. An undercurrent of distrust held the nation back from the storm of abuse by which they sought to overwhelm American slavery. Ultimate history will make a different record from that which appears to be written now. When the philosophy of reform comes to be better understood, it will be seen that the power which lifted the national conscience, and consolidated it against the national sin, was the temperate and balanced testimony of the American Church.

All that frantic and vituperative reform achieved was to substitute passions for principles. The consequence was a volcanic, instead of a pacific, overthrow of the wrong. The masses of the people, especially, never adopted the policy of infidel reformers in that crisis of our history. They went into the final conflict reluctantly. The Christian theory of reform commanded their confidence, and, if let alone, would have carried them to a bloodless victory.

The world has yet to appreciate in full the supremacy of spiritual over material forces in the treatment of organic wrongs. We have yet to give full weight to the superiority of silent over tumultuous revolutions. We have yet to comprehend the worth of temperate as compared with intoxicated opinion. We have, therefore, yet to realize the ascendency of the calm, self-collected utterances of souls moved by God's Spirit over the corrosive and often malign teachings of professional reformers. Until these lessons are learned by heart, the world must advance by paroxysms, in place of those tranquil changes in which Christianity imitates nature in the most blessed and permanent of her operations.

The Christian pulpit should give expression to this view in the style it adopts in the treatment of organized forms of sin. Vituperation in such discourse is not power. Frenzied discussion never settles any thing. Malign denunciation never carries conviction in the end. The real power of the pulpit in such national controversies does not lie in silence, indeed; but neither does it lie in passionate debate. Its real power is the power of temperate opinion, expressed in guarded and balanced speech, and specially in fidelity to spiritual principles and the use of spiritual resources. So Christianity has always spoken against organic wrong when it has been successful.

3. Descriptions of individual guilt also often suffer from intemperate expression. The Rev. Mr. M———, a Methodist preacher of great distinction twenty years ago, once described the guilt of a gambler by a stentorian delivery of this invective: "He would rattle the dicebox on the grave of his father, and stake his salvation on the threshold of hell." Well, perhaps he would. But saying it thus does not convict him, nor give to others any very vivid conception of his guilt. If we could see the thing done as composedly as we listen to such a description of it, it would do very little to deter us from the crime. John Foster says that such preaching "resembles a false alarm of thunder: a sober man, not wont to be startled by sounds, looks out to see if it be not the rumbling of a cart."

4. Reproofs of the inconsistencies of Christians are often powerless through excess of severity. Said one thoughtful man of the world, "Judging by the tone of the pulpit, I should suppose that you Christians are the worst men living." Intemperate rebuke leaves behind it a malign impression. That is never powerful

rebuke of good men, which is founded on an ascetic theory of the Christian life. The most renowned satirists have not aimed at an ascetic reproof, even of vice. Critics have remarked how much Juvenal's satires gain from his good nature. Artists say that Hogarth's satirical paintings are made doubly impressive by the introduction of children. Thackeray's criticism of the fashionable life of London is saved from cynicism, only by his obvious good feeling. One principle runs through all these examples: it is that the power of rebuke is augmented by kindly expression. The same principle should pervade the addresses of the pulpit to infirm believers. Unmitigated reproof is never powerful, because it is never true. It is not addressed to unmitigated guilt.

5. A word here deserves attention, upon the physiognomy of the preacher. Ascetic impression is often made in condemnatory preaching, by unconscious severity of countenance. We express more than we mean, because our faces speak beyond our words.

> "Oh, wad some power the giftie gie us
> To see oursels as others see us!"

It is the misfortune of some preachers that they have stern faces. Children are afraid of them. By dint of hard labor and trouble and sickness and self-distrust, they have acquired hard features, which redouble the severity of reproof from their lips. That which is called "faithful preaching" must therefore be often measured by the sense which uncontrollable habits of lip and brow will put into it. A chronic scowl may make simple earnestness express misanthropy. A means of usefulness which is worth a lifelong culture of benignant feeling and cheerful thoughts is a beaming countenance.

For the want of this, reprimand from the pulpit may become a philippic.

6. The intemperate style sometimes infects and weakens confessions of sin. St. Paul knew himself to have been guilty of persecuting the church of Christ. It was not intemperate in him to call himself the "chief of sinners." Such confession from such a man did no violence to his conscience or his common sense. But it does not follow that all converted men can properly use that language of themselves. Not only is it untrue, but it expresses an intoxicated working of conscience which the good sense of other men repels.

Passages are extant in some religious diaries which ought never to have been written, still less exposed to the public eye. They express the weakness of a distorted conscience. The Rev. Dr. —— on one occasion wrote thus in his diary (I quote it from memory): "It has seemed to me to-day that my depravity is more profound than that of Satan himself." Soon afterwards he entered this confession: "At a recent date I recorded that my depravity seemed to me more profound than that of Satan. To-day I feel like asking pardon of Satan for making the comparison." We speak and think tenderly of a good man who has been tempted in a moment of weakness into such humiliation. But does the confession give us any very powerful conception of sin? Who believes it of Dr. ——? Who accepts it as a becoming model of confession? Who sympathizes with it as a manly experience which we ought to have any desire to imitate? Such a confession expresses a hysteric paroxysm of conscience, not its healthy and vigorous working.

Returning now from these *excursus*, it should be re-

marked, further, that the popular taste and Christian experience often conflict with each other in the reception of the intemperate style. Although it produces on the popular mind no salutary impression, some forms of it do create a theatrical interest. Here lies the temptation to the indulgence of it. It gratifies a craving for coarse stimulus. It entertains the sensuous, and often the malign emotions, as a species of scenic acting. This will be the more apt to occur if such preaching is accompanied with a passionate delivery. I suspect that this theatrical interest was the character of the effect produced on Dr. Franklin by the preaching of Whitefield, who often indulged in intemperate speech. The real weakness of it morally is often concealed by the illusion of a dramatic effect. A preacher is tempted to yield to a popular taste of this kind, because it insures to him a hearing.

A very significant fact, therefore, should be allowed to come to the rescue of his good sense: it is, that the drift of Christian experience is vigorously averse to the theatrical craving. That drift is perceptible in proportion to the depth of the experience. The holiest minds have no such craving. With intellectual culture, or without it, the ultimate result is nearly uniform. One of the first evidences which the people of Kilmany detected of the spiritual revolution in the character of Dr. Chalmers was that the vehemence of his delivery was moderated. A similar effect is sometimes seen in revolutions of style. A deepening of religious tone moderates extravagances of utterance. Have you not observed this in the prayers and exhortations of the conference-meeting? Have you not known the presence of the Holy Spirit to be indicated, apparently, by chastened tones of voice, by temperate expressions of truth, by charitable judgments of

character, by style and manner indicative of gentle surprises, as if new views of truth were opening upon the vision? Have we not learned to judge of the purity and depth of religious awakenings by a certain balance of character and stillness of working?

Such facts bear with great force on the philosophy of preaching. They suggest that the most profound conceptions of truth tend always to a state of repose. The interest they excite is the interest of equalized sensibilities. Symmetry of emotion results from intensity at many points. In such a stage of Christian culture there is a remote resemblance to the serenity of the mind of God.

The style of the pulpit, therefore, it should be remembered, has a natural expression for this mature experience of truth. That expression is never passionate. Its chief characteristic is its simplicity. It is apt to choose language rather for what it suggests than for what it expresses. It is full of thought, puts life into dead words, gives hints of many truths in its way of representing one, makes opposite truths illuminate each other, indulges in contradictions which are more truthful than truisms, puts the hearer on the track of discovery, invites an intense but self-collected delivery, and leaves at last, in its best examples, a sense of stillness like the repose indicated by the deepest soundings of the sea. Have you not listened to such preaching, at least in fragments of sermons? Have you not read such passages in the literature of the pulpit? Do you not find them in the writings of St. John?

Recognize the fact, then, that the most intense energy of expression is realized in the style here described, and that, if a preacher will command it by thought which needs it, he may depend on a response to it from

the Christian culture of the pew. Preach, therefore, your best thoughts to your best hearers, let the popular craving be what it may. Preach the best experience you find in you *to* the best experience you find around you. You can not be disappointed in the result. You will often be sensible of silent responses, which will be the witness of the Holy Ghost.

II. We have thus far considered energy of style as having its foundation in the state of a writer's mind in the act of composing. We now advance to regard it *as assisted by certain means which are common to the literal and the figurative uses of language.*

1. Of these, several relate to the words of a discourse considered singly. And first, energy is promoted by the use of pure words. Purity of style assists energy, partly because it assists perspicuity, but more directly because it tends to make style intelligible at the moment of its utterance. Labyrinthine style tends to feeble impression. Slow evolution of the meaning is, for that reason, weak. But rapidity in a hearer's discovery of thought enlivens, and therefore enforces, thought. This is the working of a pure English vocabulary. The force of it is augmented by the silent sympathy of a hearer with his vernacular tongue. That which energy adds to perspicuity is chiefly movement of the sensibilities of hearers by the aid of their imagination. Of this power, vernacular style must be the chief medium; and the most perfect vernacular is the purest English.

On a similar principle, energy is augmented by the preponderance of a Saxon vocabulary. The strength of a Saxon style has become one of the truisms of literature. "Saxon" is a synonym of "strong." It is worthy of remark, that public speakers often talk Saxon who do not write it, nor employ it predominantly in

public address. A man's colloquial style often discloses his Saxon birthright, when a Latinized dialect prevails in his continuous discourse. This is sometimes the explanation, in part, of the fact that a preacher produces more impression by his extemporaneous than by his written discourses. It is, that, in extemporaneous discourse, he speaks as he talks; and he talks Saxon. His extemporizing is thus homely, as distinct from stately speech. It is speaking *home* to the sympathies of hearers. A stereotyped criticism on a bookish speaker is, "You should speak more as you talk." This means, in part, "Use more liberally a Saxon vocabulary."

Perhaps the most remarkable illustration in literary history of the contrast between extemporaneous and written styles is found in Dr. Samuel Johnson. Johnson the conversationalist and Johnson the essayist were two different men. In writing he was a Latin slave: in conversation he was a Saxon prince. Short, crisp, blunt monosyllabic words abounded in his colloquial style; and such words in our language (those, at least, which are naturally used colloquially) are almost all Saxon. Dr. Johnson ruled English letters in his day mainly by what he talked, not by what he wrote. His fame grew out of what we speak of as the Johnson Club. Goldsmith, Sir Joshua Reynolds, Edmund Burke, and Boswell knew him at his best, because they heard him talk. In our own day his works are little read. If he could have respected his Saxon vocabulary enough to have made it the warp of his written style, his works might have lived another century beyond us. But no: he could talk Saxon, but he must write Latin. The ghost of Cicero haunted him when he took to his pen. His first conception of a thought was commonly in Saxon forms; and he then deliberately set to work, as other

sophomores have done, to translate it into an English mimicry of the Ciceronian. Macaulay has made you familiar with amusing instances of this.

Every preacher may find it worth his while to search his own colloquial style, to see if he has not already at his command there resources of Saxon vigor which he is not using in his public speech, but which are perfectly pure, racy English, and therefore as well fitted to public speech as to the table-talk.

Yet the claims of a Saxon style must be qualified. Lord Brougham lays down the rule, to which in theory he makes no exception, "Always prefer the Saxon word." But in practice he constantly disregarded the rule, as every writer will do who indulges much in contemplative or philosophic thinking. The Greek and Latin importations into our language are indispensable to such thinking. They are more varied and more precise than the words of Saxon stock. We are safe in saying, that a Saxon vocabulary should be chosen when strength of style is the chief quality which the thought demands. But often the thought requires not so much strength as precision. Then the Saxon must give place to the Latin or Greek derivative. The thought, again, may require beauty or pathos of expression. Then one instinctively chooses the word which is capable of mellifluous utterance; and that most surely is not the Saxon word. For some conceptions a sensitive writer will long for a liquid dialect like the Tuscan. But such qualifications leave the general principle intact, that a Saxon vocabulary is a strong vocabulary. It should, therefore, predominate in the expression of strength of thought.

Energy of style is further augmented by the use of specific words. "Thou art my rock," "my fortress,"

"my tower," "my shield," "my buckler." Why does the Psalmist use these specific emblems, instead of saying, "Thou dost preserve me," "protect me," "befriend me"? It is because the specific quality of the symbols gives reality to the thought by their appeal to the imagination. In like manner, the Scriptures discourse upon the two future worlds, heaven and hell. Rarely, if ever, does the Bible present these as states of being, and never as qualities of character. The inspired thought conceives of them as places: the inspired style therefore paints them as things. It describes persons in them. Heaven is a city, a country, a building, mansions; music is there; harps are there, crowns, palms, robes, rivers, thrones, gates, walls. So the Bible represents hell as a place of fire, a lake of brimstone, prepared for the Devil. Its population is personal. Employ these representations as we may theologically, they involve the secret of a very vital force in preaching on such themes. The scriptural type of preaching on the future worlds is, in the main, not didatic, it is picturesque. The force of it is due largely to the specific element in the style.

Energy is still further promoted by the abundant use of short words. Run over in your minds such synonyms as these: "wish and desire, breadth and latitude, joy and felicity, sure and indubitable, height and altitude, law and regulation, guess and conjecture." Are we not sensible of a difference in the force of these words, which is due almost wholly to their diversity in length? The chief defect in the vocabulary of Dr. Chalmers is the preponderance of long over short words. Vigor of expression often depends on surprises in thought, and therefore on quick turns in style. There is said to be even a painful force in the strokes of the wing of a

humming-bird, arising from the almost inconceivable rapidity of their succession. Force in style may be due to a similar cause; but a style in which long words greatly preponderate can have no quick strokes in utterance. The intent of the author is often disclosed prematurely. The plot of a sentence, if I may use the figure, is detected before it is ripe.

Analyze your own sentences sharply, and you will often find that you have, in the heat of composition, written with unconscious guile. Your style here and there is a trap. It is so constructed as to catch the listener in surprises: you detect in it a series of ambuscades. If, then, it be so constructed, by a large preponderance of long words, as to give the hearer time to discover the catch prematurely, it defeats itself. An unwieldy style, through excess of this long-winded structure, resembles the movement of a crocodile in chasing its prey. An agile boy, it is said, can keep himself out of its way by running in a circle. Recall the familiar example which Macaulay gives from Dr. Johnson. Said Johnson, speaking of "The Rehearsal," a production then fresh to the critics of London, "'The Rehearsal' has not wit enough to keep it sweet." This is brief, quick, Saxon strength. But, after a pause, he summoned to his aid the dignity of autocratic criticism, and remarked, "I should have said, 'The Rehearsal' has not vitality sufficient to preserve it from putrefaction." This is the style of the crocodile.

It needs hardly to be said that the choice of short words may be easily abused. A style made up of monosyllables would be the extreme of affectation. "Robinson Crusoe" was, a few years ago, translated into monosyllabic words. But "Robinson Crusoe" is addressed to a juvenile taste. Even children will not

long patter through a story of that length in monosyllabic slippers. The man must have been a wiseacre who is said to have read fifteen pages of it without discovering that it was not the original.

Energy is also aided by the choice of words whose sound is significant of their sense. "Hiss, rattle, clatter, rumbling, twitch, swing, sullen, strut," are specimens of words not relatively numerous in our language, but very forcibly expressive, because their sound reduplicates their sense. Ought onomatopoetic words to be chosen studiously? Will not the deliberate selection of them cultivate an affected energy? Doubtless it may do so; but the instinct of speech has created such words in all languages, and that which the human mind thus sanctions, literary taste may wisely select. Why not, as well as other elements of speech which carry the same authority? They do not constitute a sufficiently large proportion of any language to form a strong temptation to an affected use.

2. One of the means of augmenting energy of expression, which concern both the literal and figurative uses of language, relates to the number of words. It is conciseness of style. Conciseness has been already considered as tributary to perspicuity and to precision: it is more conducive to energy than to either. It has passed into an axiom in criticism, "The more concise, the more forcible." Many years ago Kossuth, the Hungarian patriot, in an address in the city of New York, expressed the idea that the time had gone by when the people could be depended on for their own enslavement by standing armies He compressed it into two words. Said he, "Bayonets think." The words caught the popular taste like wildfire. They took rank with the proverbs of the language immediately.

The idea was not new, but the style of it was. It had been floating in the dialect of political debate ever since the battle of Bunker Hill, but never before had it been condensed into a brace of words. The effect was electric. Millions then, for the first time, felt it as a fact in political history. Within a month the newspapers of Oregon had told their readers that bayonets think. Everybody told everybody else that bayonets think. In style it was a minié-bullet: everybody who heard it was struck by it. Such is the force of a laconic dialect.

The most important violations of conciseness as affecting energy are three. One is *tautology*. A weak style is sometimes due to no other cause than repetition of ideas in varied language. This is toil without progress. A tendency to tautology was created in English style by the Norman Conquest of England. As you are aware, from the time of William the Conqueror, the Norman was made by law the dialect of the court, Saxon remaining the vernacular of the people. The usage, therefore, grew up of expressing thought consecutively by the use of words from both dialects, and meaning precisely the same thing. In the Book of Common Prayer, which was constructed for court and people alike, this tautology is still discernible in such phrases as "assemble and meet together," "dissemble and cloak," "pure and holy," "confirm and strengthen," "joy and felicity." Traces of the same feature still exist among us, especially in the dialect of extemporaneous prayer. Diffuse writers commonly betray their diffuseness in this yoking of Saxon and Norman synonyms together.

Do you not recognize the following words in couples as having become standard yokes in style of the second and third rate? — "Null and void, clear and obvious,

pains and penalties, forms and ceremonies, bounds and limits, peace and quiet, sort or kind, weak and feeble, mild and gentle, just and righteous, rules and regulations, trust and confidence"? Some of these do not illustrate strictly the contrast of Saxon and Norman roots; but, of these couples, in every instance one word was familiar to the Saxon mind, and the other to the Norman. In the first blending of the two dialects hundreds of such twins found their way into the usage of writers. For a time they were a necessity. But, now that the two dialects are welded into one, such couples are no longer needed. They encumber style by needless synonyms. Yet that usage has infected the entire history of English diction from that day to this. It has led to the duplication of a multitude of words not distinguished by that diversity of origin. One of the first acts of a young writer, therefore, in the criticism of his own discourses, should be to examine the braces of words, and see if they do not comprise needless synonyms.

Similar to the tautological sacrifice of conciseness, and yet distinct from that, is *verboseness*. This occurs when words are introduced which express unimportant shades of thought. Sentences, the gist of which might be compressed into half their length, are extended to make room for hints which add a little, but not much, to the weight of thought. They do not add enough to compensate for the increase of bulk and the labor of carriage. Complex sentences are needlessly preferred to simple ones.

In poetry, conciseness is thus often sacrificed to rhyme. Rhetorical text-books give an example from Dr. Johnson. Imitating one of Juvenal's poems, he commences thus —

"Let observation with extensive view
Survey mankind from China to Peru."

One critic satirizes this couplet by saying that it is only expressing in rhyme this thought: "Let observation with extensive observing survey mankind extensively." Yet the defect is not exactly that of tautology: it is a verbose insertion of minor hints for the sake of the measure.

In prose, and specially in inexperienced writers, the error is most frequently committed by piling together qualifying words and clauses. Adjectives, adverbs, and adjective and adverbial clauses, if they do not add force enough to support them by their intrinsic worth, must of course be carried by the rest of the sentence. They may, therefore, make all the difference between heavy and sprightly movement. The more weighty the thought, the less force it may have, if, relatively to the main idea, it is a dead weight. Style, to be forcible, must have celerity of movement. Thought thus borne on words must be capable of quick utterance. Words must be wings. Rapid succession, if coherent, is the token of energetic thinking. Thought is a quick process, the most nimble that we know of. "As quick as thought," we say, and we can say no more, to express rapidity. Energy of expression must always convey that quality in thought. Yet to do this it must have buoyancy proportioned to the weight it carries. Without this, we say of style that it drags, no matter how solid the materials.

Verboseness is often the peril of the scholastic as opposed to the popular style. A scholar commonly writes in retirement and at his leisure. He writes under the influence of tastes and habits which keep him aloof from real life. He is apt, therefore, to take his time for it.

The mere sense of leisure will often make a man plod. He involves, he complicates, he twists, he tangles his thought, merely because he has the time to do it. A pressure from without which should crowd him, would create force of style by compelling him to quicker movement. Dr. Arnold showed a very keen observation of men and things when he said to a friend who urged him to write more for the newspapers, "I can not write well for the newspapers. A newspaper demands a more condensed style than I am master of, such as only the mingling in the actual shock of opinions can give a man." This is the true ideal of a popular style, — as true of the pulpit as of the editor's chair.

I select as a specimen of that kind of force which conciseness alone may create in style, the following description of China: "It is a country where roses have no fragrance, and women no petticoats; where the laborer has no sabbath, and the magistrate no sense of honor; where the roads bear no vehicles, and the ships have no keels; where old men fly kites; where the needle points to the south, and the sign of being puzzled is to scratch the heel; where the seat of honor is on the left hand, and the seat of intellect in the stomach; where to take off your hat is an insolent gesture, and to wear white is to put yourself in mourning; which has a literature without an alphabet, and a language without a grammar." This is in style what sketching is in art. The passage contains not one adverb, only one adjective, not one qualifying clause, and nothing expressive of a secondary idea. It reminds one of national proverbs, which are commonly models of that density of thought which the compressed wisdom of ages deserves. Who ever heard of a long-winded proverb?

It is a singular idiosyncrasy sometimes detected in

public speakers, that they are verbose in the use of certain favorite parts of speech. One has an unconscious favoritism for adjectives, another for adverbs, another for substantives in apposition. In manuscript sermons I have sometimes transformed a weak style into a comparatively strong one by running the pen through three-fourths of the adjectives. This curious phenomenon of composition deserves to be remembered in a preacher's criticism of his own discourses. The style of Rufus Choate, magnificent as it was in the affluence of its vocabulary, would still have been invigorated if it had been shorn of one-half its adjectives.

But the view here suggested should be qualified by the remark, that sometimes the qualifying word imparts a tonic to the style. One such word may condense the whole emphasis of the utterance. De Quincey, descanting on the falsehoods of Pope as being no indication of recklessness of the feelings of other people, says, "In cases where he had no reason to suspect any lurking hostility, he showed even a *paralytic* benignity." A half-page of description could not so forcibly express the sarcasm which is flung at Pope in this one word.

One other method by which the want of conciseness may impair energy of expression is that of a needless circumlocution of thought. Circumlocution of thought is not necessarily tautological nor verbose. No more words may be employed than are needful to express thought circuitously. The fault lies in multiplying words by a circumlocutory train of thinking, when direct thinking is equally good, and, if so, better, because it is direct. Says Mr. Disraeli, in a speech on the hustings, "The national debt is nothing but a flea-bite." But in the House of Commons he scruples to repeat the figure in its strong, homely form, but says, "The

national debt is nothing but the incision of the most troublesome, though not the most unpopular, of insects." Why this polite euphemism? Circumlocutory thought displaced directness, and that made just the difference between weakness and energy of diction.

LECTURE XVI.

ENERGY OF STYLE, CONCLUDED.—CONSTRUCTION.—RHETORICAL FIGURE.

THE last Lecture closed with a consideration of conciseness of style as generally tributary to energy. The view there presented is subject to exceptions in which conciseness is the reverse of energy. Exception occurs where conciseness is obviously affected. Affectation of any thing is never other than a weakness. A friend of Dr. Johnson died, and he wrote to his widow a note of condolence, thus: "Dear madam, oh!" In less than a year she married again, and he wrote a note of congratulation, thus: "Dear madam, ah!" This would satisfy Lacedæmonian taste in respect to brevity, but what is the effect of the laconics rhetorically? Would the first note comfort a disconsolate widow? Would the second please a comforted widow? Neither. Both are extremes of affectation, in which the doctor was thinking of his very smart style. No style is impressive which is not sincere.

Again: exception obviously occurs where diffuseness is necessary to perspicuity. For some audiences, on some subjects, as we have seen, perspicuity demands diffuseness. In such cases, energy, of course, demands the same. Perspicuity always lies back of energy. The form of concise force is delusive if the thought is not clear. It is not entirely fair to criticise an author by fragments of his composition dislocated from their connections;

but the following are examples, which, read in their connections, would still, I think, represent obscure conciseness. They are taken from the earlier essays of Ralph Waldo Emerson. "The way of life is by abandonment." "With the geometry of sunbeams the soul lays the foundation of nature." "I, the imperfect, adore my own perfect." "The soul knows only the soul." "The world globes itself in a drop of dew." "The great genius returns to essential man." "Prayer is the spirit of God pronouncing his works good." "The devil is an ass."

Such aphoristic sentences abound in the style of Emerson in his early manhood. They are laconic, but they are not forcible. The question is not whether they convey any meaning, but do they convey any such force of meaning as that professed by their extremely laconic form? Their compactness promises a great deal: does the reader realize the promise? Who is sure that he understands them? How many of these sage proverbs, which by their form put themselves by the side of the apothegms of the ages, will you remember in a week? Probably none but the compliment to Satan, and that is asinine in more senses than one. It will cling to your memory rather as a rude jest than as the utterance of an axiomatic truth.

If you desire a "dictionary unabridged" of specimens of weakness in style caused by obscure conciseness, let me whisper to you confidentially, that you should borrow on some dark night, and under pledge of secrecy, from some very juvenile friend, or from some country tavern, "Tupper's Proverbial Philosophy." Yet that book has found a hundred thousand buyers!

Exception to the principle that conciseness is energy occurs in some examples of descriptive writing. Ed-

mund Burke, in his speech on the nabob of Arcot, describes the effects of the war carried on by the East India Company in the Carnatic territory. An unimaginative speaker, seeing things in what Bacon calls "dry light," would have said, "The war was a war of extermination:" this was the whole of it. An indignant and diffusive speaker, boiling over with his wrath, would have said, "The war was murderous, inhuman, devilish." His invective would have spent itself in epithets. But Burke, more forcible than either, compresses his indignation, has not a word to say of the character of the war, but describes the facts, and leaves them to speak for themselves. He says, "When the British army traversed, as they did, the Carnatic for hundreds of miles in all directions, through the whole line of their march they did not see one man, not one woman, not one child, not one four-footed beast of any description whatever." Energy of thought here requires particularity of detail: therefore energy of expression requires many words.

Sometimes a descriptive speaker needs to gain time for a thought to take hold of an obtuse hearer. Macaulay says of the effects of the French Revolution, "Down went the old church of France, with all its pomp and wealth." This is forcible fact forcibly put. But he intensifies it by saying, "The churches were closed; the bells were silent; the shrines were plundered; the silver crucifixes were melted down; buffoons dressed in surplices came dancing the carmagnole, even to the bar of the Convention." By these details, time is gained for the imagination to realize the main truth that the church was destroyed. Longinus illustrates the two styles here contrasted by the examples of Demosthenes and Cicero. He says, "Demosthenes was concisely, Cicero diffusely

sublime. Demosthenes was a thunderbolt: Cicero was a conflagration."

Exception to the general principle before us takes place, also, in certain momentary utterances of intense emotion. Profane men in a fit of passion do not swear concisely. Intense emotion may express itself, on the spur of the moment, by a volume of words. Passion heaps words on words, piles epithet on epithet, repeats itself once and again, and thus creates in style that kind of energy which a torrent symbolizes. A volley of oaths is the transient utterance of overwhelming wrath. The single tremendous oath of studied force is the expression of cool purpose and self-collection. Dignified discourse sometimes admits a style which transiently resembles that of overpowering passion. Style, then, does not condense, but expands thought, pours it forth in a volume of sound. Words at best are but hints. They are but symbols of ideas. The sum total of them is a symbol as well as the units. A flood of words may have the same kind of force as that of a flood of tears.

But is not this contradictory to the principle we have considered, that energy demands self-possession? Yes, it is so in appearance, but not in fact. I have said that it is transient, often momentary. Naturally it occurs in fragments of discourse. Its brevity is a sign that it involves no loss of mental balance. You give way to emotion in it, as if with full consciousness that you do it of design, and that the ebullition will subside at your will. Did you never pause in the street to watch a horse at the top of his speed, when at first you doubted whether he was not a runaway? And, when you saw that his rider had him well in hand, did not your first thought enhance your sense of power in the second? There is in style a phenomenon which resembles that.

Speech carried to the verge of frenzy, but indulged only for the moment, then reined in, and used for a purpose, becomes an evidence, and therefore an instrument, of power. Disorder ruled and utilized is the exponent of superlative power.

3. Not only does energy of style concern words considered singly; not only the number of words; but there is a class of tributaries to it which concerns the construction of sentences. We can not wisely carry criticism of construction beyond a few simple principles. For the most part, in practice, it must be left to the bidding of the oratorical instinct. But in written composition especially, the three following principles of rhetorical mechanism may be applied without detriment to freedom in composing.

One is, that emphatic words be so located that their force shall be obvious. Observe, this criticism does not concern the choice of emphatic words: it concerns location only. The where is often more significant than the what. The distinction often made between the natural and the inverted order of a sentence is fallacious. Any order is natural which makes obvious the full force of the language. The oratorical instinct needs to be so trained, that in practice it will spontaneously choose the natural order, be it inverted or direct. Yet one may deliberately apply this as one principle of mechanism in style, that a sentence should not commonly end or begin with an insignificant word.

The ending and the beginning of a sentence are the only two localities with which criticism can consciously concern itself, in the act of composing, without loss of freedom. But so far, conscious vigilance may direct the pen. Therefore we should not end a sentence with a little word, unless the connection gives it emphasis.

One writer, who probably means no more than this, lays down the rule (so the text-books tell us) that a preposition ought not to close a sentence. The most conclusive answer to such a rule is the very form in which the rhetorical instinct of the critic cast the statement of it. He puts it thus: "A preposition is a feeble word to end a sentence *with*." This rule, though in more adroit form of statement, has long encumbered the books on rhetoric. It is indefensible in any form. A preposition as such is by no means a feeble word. What can be finer than this from Rufus Choate? "What! Banish the Bible from our schools? Never, so long as there is left of Plymouth Rock a piece large enough to make a gunflint *of!*" This is purest idiomatic English. Our Lord's rebuke to his disciples is fashioned, in our translation, on the same model. "Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are *of*." The old Scotch interrogative, "What for?" is as pure English in written as in colloquial speech.

The prejudice against this prepositional form of ending grew out of the affectation of Latin construction at a time when English literature was despised, and nothing was deemed worthy of respect which was not of ancient classic origin. The true principle, and the only one which the oratorical instinct can use in the act of composing, respecting the ending of a sentence, is the one I have named, — that a sentence should not needlessly be ended with an unimportant word of any kind. A similar rule holds good, but with more frequent exception, respecting the beginning of a sentence. When energy of expression is required, we should not, if we can avoid it, locate at the beginning insignificant words. Certain declarative phrases, such as "it is," "there is," are employed to start the movement of sentences when

often they are notemphatic : they are only mechanical expedients for setting the ball in motion. Among inexperienced writers, the word "and" probably begins more sentences than any other word in the language.

Important words, when the flexibility of style will permit, should end a sentence and begin it, if force of expression is the quality demanded by the thought. Beyond this, criticism can not, in my judgment, instruct the instinct of the orator, which is in every man. Obey that instinct, and you can not go wrong. The most fruitful cause of languid style is heedless composing. Writers are never among those fortunate architects who build better than they know. The majority of us often ignore our best and plainest intuitions. Hence comes all our insignificance in speech.

The mechanism of sentences may assist energy further by the conscious use or omission of the conjunctive beginning. I have just observed that the word "and" probably begins more sentences in the productions of inexperienced writers than any other in the language. This fact gives importance to intelligent criticism of all forms of conjunctive beginning. Let it be observed, then, that the conjunctive beginning is forcible if the succession of thought requires it. Often it does so. Something is needed to express or to hint the fact of continuity. The idea of inference, or of other sequence, or of qualification, or of contrast, is to the point. Instinctively, then, you link sentence to sentence by beginning the second of two with "but" or "and," or an adverbial term which has a conjunctive effect, like "yet" or "nevertheless." What is the exact force of this conjunctive beginning? It is to bridge over the period preceding. Sometimes energy requires that.

But, without such demand of thought, the conjunc

tive beginning is meaningless, and therefore vapid. Did you never hear an inferior conversationalist begin sentence after sentence with the corrupt formula "and-er"? That indicates momentary vacuity of mind. The speaker is on the hunt for something to say. The "and-er" has no conjunctive force. Not once in a score of times does the connection demand a reminder of that which went before. This mongrel expression is only an interjectional expletive, by which the speaker holds on to the right of utterance while his mind is exploring. To compare it with a thing on a level with it in dignity, it is like the travelling-bag which you leave to represent you when you for a moment leave your seat in a railcar. Precisely such is the needless use of the conjunctive beginning in written discourse. In the succession of thought it has no conjunctive force. Therefore style it is not. It is language not freighted with sense.

Oral delivery may be sadly weakened by the conjunctive beginning. Punctuation may remedy it to the eye in print; but, orally delivered, such sentences lose their only sign of separation. The period is bridged over when you do not mean it, and your style runs together. Two, even three, possibly four, short sentences, which for force of utterance ought to be short, and ought to be uttered with crisp delivery, are stretched into one long one; made long by that most flattering expedient of composition, a mechanical coupling of ideas. The conjunctive beginning, therefore, should be intelligently used. Use it when you mean it. Drop it when it is only the sign of vacuum. Common etiquette requires you to conceal a yawn.

Again: energy may be expressed in the mechanical construction of style by the skillful use of the periodic structure. What is meant by a rhetorical period? Re-

call for a moment your collegiate text-book. The period is a structure in which the completion of the sense is suspended till the close. The ancient rhetoricians compared it to a sling, from which the stone is ejected after many circuits. A loose sentence is one in which the end might grammatically occur before the close. Such a sentence is a chain, from which a link may be dropped from the end, and it will still be a chain, and will have an end. The periodic sentence is a glass ball: to part with a fragment of it is to ruin the whole.

One effect of the periodic structure is to throw forward emphasis upon the end. Also, by the suspense of the sense, attention is claimed till the close. Further: the period satisfies all the expectation it excites. In the act of attending to discourse, the mind of a hearer always gravitates. Its instinct is to seek a state of rest, and to rest at the first point at which rest is grammatically possible. In listening to the period, it finds but one such point: in listening to the loose construction, it may find many. Besides, the period permits the disclosure, to the hearer, of the growth of a thought. Here lies its chief advantage. A loose sentence can grow, only as the tail of a kite grows. A period has symmetry: its parts do more than cohere; they are interdependent and interlocked. The construction furnishes scope for that visible evolution and involution of thought which constitute the charm of the most powerful style. Critical description of this is very tame. But look, for examples, at the style of Jeremy Taylor, of Milton's prose-works, and of Edmund Burke. Those passages which will strike you as the most eloquent are the passages of sustained, prolonged intercurrence of ideas by means of the periodic mechanism.

In the most perfect examples of extemporaneous

style, thought actually grows thus in the mind of the speaker. He does not know the whole of it when he commences a sentence. Yet, by oratorical instinct, he chooses the broad, circular, periodic inclosure; and in it his mind careers around and across, gathering its materials as it goes. To the hearer that process of inventing thought is made visible, yet without suggesting the weakness of after-thought. I am stretching criticism to the verge of uselessness by attempting description of this process, but you will recognize the reality in the best of your reading. A certain loftiness of imaginative thinking can not be expressed without a skillful and free use of the periodic structure. Short, dense, antithetic sentences will not do for it. Many are masters of these who can not command the other. Dr. South could not. If he had been able to do it, he would have been a more genial critic of Jeremy Taylor.

Once more: the periodic style assists energy of expression by a certain roundness of construction which is favorable to dignity of delivery. Difficult of execution though it be, and requiring certain physical resources which few possess in their perfection, when well matched by a grand physique, in person, voice, attitude, and gesture, it carries every thing before it. The Rev. R. S. Storrs, D.D., of Brooklyn, is an example of a speaker whose physique and elocution invite the use of the periodic style; and he often employs it with great power.

But it should be observed, as a balance to the view here given, that the periodic structure may be abused. Scarcely any other mechanism of style invites abuse so fascinatingly as this. Inordinately used, it may impair energy in three ways. One is by an artificial stateliness. The following, from Mr. Hallam, will illustrate this:

"The mystical theology, which, from seeking the illuminating influence and the piercing love of Deity, often proceeded onward to visions of complete absorption in his essence, till that itself was lost, as in the East from whence this system sprung, in an annihilating pantheism, had never wanted and can never want its disciples." It would be difficult to find in the language a feebler sentence than this written on a serious theme. Its flaccidity of style is due entirely to the extreme of the rhetorical period. In style, as in manners, ease must temper stateliness.

Abuse of the period may impair energy also by a slovenly crowding of the language. I can not more briefly express the point of this criticism than by recalling to you a familiar one from De Quincey on the defectiveness of German construction. The construction which is indigenous to the German mind is the ideal realized of this abuse of the period. De Quincey writes of it thus: "Every German regards a sentence in the light of a package . . . into which his privilege is to crowd as much as he possibly can. Having framed a sentence, therefore, he next proceeds to *pack* it; which is effected partly by unwieldy tails and codicils, but chiefly by enormous parenthetic involutions. Qualifications, limitations, exceptions, illustrations, are stuffed and violently rammed into the bowels of the principal proposition. That all this equipage of accessories is not so arranged as to assist its own orderly development, no more occurs to a German as any fault than that in a package of carpets the colors and patterns are not fully displayed. To him it is sufficient that they are *there*." You doubtless recognize the original, in this caricature, of many sentences in the writings of Kant.

Abuse of the period, furthermore, impairs energy in

oral address by rendering a forcible delivery impossible. In either form, that of excessive stateliness or that of slovenly crowding, impressive elocution is beyond the reach of art. Try it. Could you deliver well three pages of Sir Thomas Browne? Could you preach impressively one of Kant's sentences, covering an octavo page, and packed at that? You must chant the one, and mouth the other. In adopting the resonant periodic structure, a preacher should see to it that the passage be so adjusted as to deliver well. We must sacrifice an excellence in written style, if it is not also an excellence in oral speech. A daring exploit is it under some conditions, to speak the period at all. A double-bass voice in an auditorium whose acoustic proportions put in a claim for a hearing of its own will doom any specimen of the periodic style to ridicule.

III. Thus far, energy of style has been treated as depending on the state of a writer's mind in the act of composing, and as depending on certain tributaries which are common to both the literal and the figurative uses of language. It remains now to consider it *as related to certain means which are peculiar to figurative speech.*

Of these should be first recalled those principles concerning imagery which were named as essential to perspicuity. In treating that branch of our general subject, the chief causes of obscurity in style were mentioned, and discussed at length. They were, incongruous imagery, mixed imagery, learned imagery, excess of imagery, and the absence of imagery. We need not traverse the same ground again any farther than to observe that the same causes may render style feeble which render it obscure. Indeed, they may do so, by making it obscure. Any thing that blurs a thought deadens its force.

Good taste is even more sensitive to the force of imagery than to its clearness.

The little that needs to be said beyond this will recall to you your collegiate text-books. I might be well content with a general reference to them, if it were not for certain suggestions of a professional character which will not be found there. Two preliminaries here will prevent misconception. One is, that figure in speech is not confined to imagery strictly so called. Construction in style admits of figure. This is what the books mean when they enumerate "figures of rhetoric." A sentence by its very structure may be figurative when its words are not so. By an occult sense, style may be made figurative when its words are as literal as the alphabet. Irony, for instance, is one of the "figures of rhetoric."

The other preliminary is, that the object of naming these "figures of rhetoric" is not to facilitate a mechanical use of them. The use of them ought not to be mechanical. Criticism which should make them so would be worse than useless. Moreover, criticism is useless in assisting the invention of these figures of speech. The invention must come from the instinct of an excited mind, or it can not be at all. The most that criticism can do is to confirm the oratorical instinct in the use of such resources, and to guard against abuses of them. We may therefore pass rapidly over them, remarking only such hints as may subserve the tasteful and forcible use of them in the pulpit.

1. The instinct of oratory numbers among its simplest figures of rhetoric the *climax*. Climactic[1] order

[1] I coin the word "climactic," on the ground of its regularity of structure, like that of "eclectic," "mystic," "hysteric," "ictic," etc., and chiefly on the ground of the absolute necessity of it to the fullness of the language. Many writers use it, ignoring the fact that usage has not yet established it beyond dispute.

itself expresses an idea, — that of rise in thought. It is a symbol of cumulation, and cumulation of thought is force. In few expedients is the skill of a writer more constantly put in unconscious requisition than in this of the pertinent use of the cumulative structure. In the order of adjectives, of adverbs, of verbs, of substantives, of clauses, a choice is practicable, which commonly climax should determine. You are heedless of the instinct of oratory, if you say, "he was beloved and respected," instead of saying, "he was respected and beloved," unless the "respect" in question is the point which needs enforcement. Would you say, "he had a good conscience and a Roman nose"? Why, then, reverse the order of climax in any energetic speech? Climax reversed is one form of burlesque. A succession of tapering sentences, advancing from the greater to the less, makes one feel as if one were sitting on an inclined plane. By confusion of order, proceeding from greater to less and from less to greater in succession, style may seem to make a zigzag movement.

2. The instinct of forcible utterance recognizes the energy of *antithesis* in style. Antithetic structure expresses an idea, — that of contrast. Contrast itself is force. De Quincey supposes the whole structure of the "Paradise Lost" to rest, as a work of art, on a designed multiplication of contrasts. That which some have charged to the pedantry of Milton he claims to be the effect of a lurking antagonism of effects. The introduction of architecture into pandemonium, and again into paradise, he vindicates, not by any law of historic probability, but simply by the law of imagination, which invents and delights in reciprocal collision of ideas.

It is this intrinsic energy of contrast which inclines deep feeling to express itself in contradictions. St.

Paul, with no oratorical theory about it, pours out his profound experience in forms which are false, yet which deceive nobody: "Sorrowing, yet always rejoicing; dying, yet we live; having nothing, yet possessing all things." What is the secret of this language from De Bray, the Huguenot martyr? — "These shackles are more honorable to me than golden rings: when I hear their clank, methinks I listen to the music of sweet voices and the tinkling of lutes." Contrast promotes force, also, by augmenting conciseness. Contrast saves words. Of two contrasted ideas, each is a mirror to the other; and a mirror gives you vision, instead of words. Pithy, condensed sayings, which, because of their force, pass into proverbs, and live for ever, commonly take the antithetic form. The majority of the proverbs of Solomon are of the antithetic structure.

3. The intuition of the orator recognizes the *interrogation* as a tribute to energy in style. Few expedients of speech so simple as this are so effective in giving vigor to style. A sermon comparatively dull may be made comparatively vivacious, and so far forcible, by a liberal sprinkling of interrogatives. Is a declarative utterance of a truth tame? Put it as an inquiry. Ask a question which implies it, and the silent answer may be more impressive to the hearer than any words of yours. Does an antithetic expression disappoint you? Try the mark of interrogation. Put it to the hearer as if he must sharpen it by a response. I do not mean that this is to be put on mechanically, but that you should throw your own mind into the mood of colloquy. Single out one man in your audience, and *talk* with him. Jeremiah Mason, who contested with Daniel Webster the headship of the Boston bar, used, in addressing juries, to single out one man in the jury-box, the man

of dullest look, of immobile countenance, who went to sleep most easily, and then directed his whole plea to him, keeping his eye upon him till the man felt that he was watched, and that the counsel had business with him. That kind of impression can often be wrought into your style, and made to come out of it again to the one hearer whom it is aimed at. The effect of that mental change in you will be magical. The style which was humdrum becomes alive, because you have come to life. The thought springs, because you spring. There is no mechanism about it: it is an honest expression of a new force within you.

Observe briefly the philosophy of the interrogative. It makes a hearer active in the reception of a truth. The chief craving of the majority of worshipers is for something to do: hence the popularity of congregational singing and of liturgic responses. An interrogative style in the sermon produces a similar effect. An interrogation is an appeal: an appeal invites silent rejoinder. Did you never see a hearer's lips move, or his head nod or shake, in answer to an interrogation from the preacher? Again: interrogation is an expression of confidence. It is a bold utterance, and therefore forceful. The instinct of earnest speech does not put doubtful opinions into the interrogative style. If we doubt, we do not give the hearer a chance to reply, even silently: therefore we say our say, but ask no questions. This is the instinct of keen oratory. Interrogation is the electric wire which carries from speaker to hearer the sign of vivid conviction. Hence arises the popularity of interrogatives among earnest talkers. The common people, when roused, spring to the interrogative. Men scold in interrogatives. This is only the vulgar counterpart of the same feature in the philippics of Demosthenes.

Further: the interrogative style invites, yes, commands, an animated delivery. He must be a remarkable speaker who for an hour in succession can deliver well declarative sentences without an interrogative break. No matter how weighty nor how skillfully constructed, a speech gets nothing if it asks nothing. The elocution natural to it flattens it. On the contrary, he must be fearfully and wonderfully made who can not in public speech put life into a question. Can you drawl a question? Can you sing a question? Can you make humdrum of a question? Can you deliver a series of questions without a quickening of your elocution? Try it. Experiment on Shylock's talk with Salarino: "I am a Jew. Hath not a Jew eyes? Hath not a Jew hands? If you prick us, do we not bleed? If you tickle us, do we not laugh? If you poison us, do we not die? And, if you wrong us, shall we not revenge?' If the interrogative could do nothing else than to energize delivery, it would be indispensable to a forcible style for that. Florists say that a bouquet of flowers is never perfect without one yellow blossom in honor of the sun. So the expedients of rhetorical figure are incomplete without the interrogative. The instinct of earnest speech craves it, and will always have it, if the speaker's taste has not been perverted by false notions of dignity.

A modification of this figure is found in the *colloquy*. This was formerly employed in the pulpit more freely than now. Question and answer, with question again and rejoinder, have often given an energetic presentation of argument. This form of discussion by disputation, as you are aware, was abundantly used by the ancient philosophers. French preachers have used it with great effect. Saurin has a sermon in which God and man

are represented in colloquy to which the audience are summoned by a herald. Some of the most impassioned passages of the Bible are in this style.

4. It scarcely needs a reminder that *hyperbole* is a favorite figure of rhetoric among energetic writers. Any thing adds force to style which expresses strength of conviction in the preacher. This hyperbole obviously does. It needs only the caution that the preacher should not allow it to pass for reckless assertion. It should never be used, therefore, in statements of doctrine. To this day, the question is a controverted one, whether St. Paul speaks in hyperbole or not, in saying, "I could wish myself accursed from Christ."

5. The forcibleness of *irony* needs no illustration. It needs, rather, to be flanked with cautions, of which one is, that it should not be a favorite with a preacher. As an instrument of serious speech, it is corrosive. In itself it repels good feeling. Were not this a world of sin, and did not sin make fools of men who must be answered according to their folly, irony might not be numbered among the expedients of manly discourse. Yet it is a curious phenomenon in literature, that many of the most renowned satirists in history have been clergymen. Rabelais, Scarron, Swift, Sterne, Sydney Smith, Mather Byles, were all of the ecclesiastical order; but their names do not command the reverent remembrance of the church.

Again: irony should not be so keen as to be misunderstood. It is an instrument capable of an invisible edge. Let it be so refined, that the reader does not discern the truth lurking in the shadow of it, and it ceases to be irony. Dean Swift once published a pamphlet on Irish children, in which he seemed to advocate the importation of Irish children into England as an

article of food. It had a great sale and in England produced a broad laugh. But a long-eared French critic adduced it as a sign of the hopeless barbarism of the English people.

6. The figure of *exclamation* deserves a caution rather than commendation. It is excessively used in the pulpit. Not only in the monosyllabic forms "oh!" and "ah!" but in the constructive forms in which the whole sentence is made exclamatory, "How great!" "How important!" "How solemn!" "Awful moment!" "Fearful tidings!" There is a style, which, for the freedom with which it employs such constructions, may be fitly termed the exclamatory style. It is very easy composition; it is a facile way of beginning a sentence: therefore we employ it excessively. It is a sign of indolent composing. Our inquiry, therefore, should be, When may we omit it? and our rule, to dispense with it whenever we can. Dean Swift commends a reader who said it was his rule to pass over every paragraph in reading, at the end of which his eye detected the note of exclamation. Horne Tooke denied that exclamations belong to language: he said they were involuntary nervous affections, like sneezing, coughing, yawning.

7. A speaker who is perfect master of his imagination will sometimes instinctively choose the figure of *vision* to express his most powerful conceptions. The life which it gives to style is splendidly illustrated in some of the prophecies. The strictly prophetic state was a state of vision of the distant future. Yet note how instinctively secular oratory adopts the same expedient. Napoleon, to his soldiers in Italy, says, "You will soon return to your homes; and your fellow-citizens will say of you, as you pass, 'He was a soldier in the army of Italy.'" So the inspired writer says, "O!

Zion it shall be said, This and that man was born in her." Edward Everett's vision of "The Mayflower" was more than equaled by some of Whitefield's experiments with the same figure in the pulpit. No eloquence furnishes grander material for the use of vision than that of the pulpit. The advent of Christ, the crucifixion, the ascension, the resurrection, heaven, hell, are themes to which a preacher can scarcely do justice without this intense and imperial figure. But, because it is so powerful, it needs a master of speech to execute it well. It is one of the expedients of style which lie on the borderline between the sublime and the ridiculous. Less than the proverbial "step" separates them.

8. The most passionate forms of eloquence employ the *apostrophe* with power. The early Christian preachers used it to excess. The unseen world was very real to their faith: therefore they often apostrophized the departed as if present to their eye. It is thought by some, that prayer to the saints had its origin in this usage of the ancient pulpit, assisted as it was by the early Christian hymnology, and specially displayed in funeral-sermons. The most notable example of this figure in secular literature is Mark Antony's apostrophe, as represented by Shakspeare, over the dead body of Cæsar. The Rev. Dr. Griffin in the Park-street Church in Boston once electrified the assembly by apostrophizing Voltaire as being in the world of the lost. "What think you," said the preacher, — "what think you, Voltaire, of Christianity now?"

The *soliloquy* should properly be regarded as a variety of the apostrophe; the latter being a direct address to anybody who is not the natural audience of the speaker. The soliloquy was often used by Rev. Dr. Davies of Virginia. In the form of self-rebuke, he would often

utter rebuke to others which they would bear in no other way. Another modification of the apostrophe is *prayer*. If reverently and seldom done, in the midst of a discourse it may have marvelous power. Such prayer has a double force: it is supplicatory, as addressed to God; and it is an indirect appeal to men. Massillon, preaching on the text, "Are there few that be saved?" after seeming to restrict to a narrow, and a narrower, and the narrowest limit, the number of the elect, broke out with the apostrophe: "O God, where *are* thine elect?" It is said that the entire audience sprang to their feet.

Is the exclamatory use of the name of God to be vindicated as rhetorical apostrophe? "My God!" "O God!" "Good God!" "In God's name!"—are these apostrophes? The French pulpit employs them with great freedom. The Rev. Dr. Nott, the celebrated president of Union College, defended and used them. The piety of the American Congress often utters its devout aspirations in this form. But these expressions are exclamatory, not apostrophic. Commonly no devout sense of the Divine Presence is felt in the use of them. The use of them in oratory is of pagan origin. Greek poetry is full of them: we owe them primarily to Homer. They were in perfect keeping with the Greek idea of the gods: rhetorically, therefore, they were not a blemish in Greek oratory. Christian theism, however, condemns them morally, and therefore Christian taste condemns them rhetorically.

These are the chief of the figures of rhetoric which the oratorical instinct has originated to assist its most forcible utterances. The charm of them lies in their variety: no one should be a favorite with a preacher. The thing needed is the cultivated instinct, which shall

choose them wisely. But the chief observation which criticism has to make upon them is, that they all imply force of emotion on the part of the speaker. Manufacture them, and they are but wooden playthings. They reflect significance back upon the principle with which these discussions began, — that a writer must write, and a speaker must speak, from the honest state of his own mind. That state must be such that he *can* write, and *can* speak, with honest enthusiasm. Nothing is powerful in speech which is not sincere. The inspiration which shall command and use these expedients of style must be, as one critic has expressed it, "**not put on from without, but put out from within.**"

LECTURE XVII.

ELEGANCE OF STYLE; DEPENDENT ON DELICACY.

A VERY vital quality, which is in many respects the opposite of energy, is elegance of style. It may be concisely defined as the quality by which thought as expressed in language appeals to our sense of the beautiful.

Beauty, like strength, is one of our ultimate conceptions. We can not define it but by the use of synonyms, which, in return, fall back upon it for their own meaning. Ruskin says, that the question why some material objects seem beautiful to us, and others not, is "no more to be asked than why we like sugar, and dislike wormwood." Sir Joshua Reynolds declares, that, if an African artist were to paint his ideal of beauty, he would produce a person of black, glossy skin, flat nose, thick lips, and woolly hair. He also affirms that the artist would be right: so greatly does the conception of beauty depend on association.

Beauty in style, I think, admits of partial analysis. I find in it four distinct elements, one or more of which exist in all elegant composition, and all of which are discoverable in the most perfect forms of elegant speech. These elements are delicacy, vividness, variety, and harmony.

I. Elegance of style, then, may be first considered as dependent on the element of *delicacy.*

1. And, first, it has its foundation in *delicacy of thought.* In "The Essay on the Sublime and the Beautiful," Edmund Burke approaches this view by claiming that smallness in an object is essential to its beauty. He observes, "When nature would make any thing specially rare and beautiful, she makes it little. Everybody calls that little which they love best on earth." An affectionate husband is apt to call his wife little, though she may weigh two hundred pounds. Dr. Johnson's wife was of nearly twice his own age at the time of their marriage; she was coarse and stout in person; she was affected in manners, and petulant in disposition; and he was far from being a man of refined feeling: yet he used to speak of her as his "dear Letty," as a child might speak of a pet kitten. The diminutive he coined out of her name, "Elizabeth."

Of beauty in style, that element which most nearly resembles this of smallness in Burke's analysis is delicacy. It is, if I may so speak, the *feminine* quality in thought. Is there not a diversity in truth, corresponding to diversity of sex in human character? Truths are masculine and feminine in their affinities. Woman originates certain conceptions more readily than man, and appreciates them more keenly. Other conceptions the masculine mind grasps the more profoundly. The literature produced by the two sexes will bear traces of this diversity, except in sporadic cases in which the one sex is rabid with the craving to *be* the other. Certain discoveries in science, certain works of art, certain truths of religion, woman will not naturally originate, any more than she will naturally be a drummer, or choose a trombone as the accompaniment of her songs.

Elegance of style, I repeat, groups within its range of expression these feminine qualities of thought. No

genuine beauty can exist in literary expression without them. Can you by any description of it in language make chain-lightning beautiful? Can you so describe in words the boom of a cannon that it shall appear in gentle undulations of beauty? But can you, in descriptive style, so represent a moss-rose, or the airs of a flute, that they shall seem other than beautiful? These diversities in style run through the whole realm of thought. They can not be ignored without producing literary deformities. The significance of this view in its bearing upon beauty of discourse will be seen in the following suggestions.

The principle in question refutes a certain prejudice against an elegant style. Elegant taste in any thing lives at the risk of being despised. Even among able writers, elegance and effeminacy are often treated as synonyms. The Jewish prayer of thanksgiving, "Lord, I thank thee that I was not born a woman!" finds its kindred among literary tastes and canons of criticism. Such is the reverence often felt for Gothic strength in speech, that elegance of diction is condemned without a hearing. We study to be perspicuous, because we must be understood. We study precision, purity, and, above all, force in style, because these add power to clearness. But of an elegant style we are apt to think as Wesley did of the manners of a gentleman, when he told his youthful preachers that they "had no more business to be gentlemen than to be dancing-masters." A special incongruity is often imagined to exist between beauty and the pulpit.

This prejudice is intensified by our English temperament. The English mind, and, as an offshoot of it, the American mind as well, are not partial to the elegant qualities, specially in public oral address. We are jeal-

ous for our strength. We are proud of our Saxon stock. We are, therefore, morbidly afraid of imposing on ourselves by elegant literary forms. We are in this respect what our language is, — hardy, rough, careless of ease. The languages and temperaments of Southern Europe are in this respect our opposites. We have cultivated learning at the expense of taste; they, taste at the expense of learning.

This prejudice, moreover, is often aggravated by affectations of the beautiful in literary expression. Affectations create caricatures of beauty: these repel taste, as they repel good sense. That cast of character which leads a young man to wear long hair, and to part it in the middle, often appears in literature in a straining after the feminine qualities of style when no beauty of thought underlies and demands them. This nauseates short-haired men, and lends reason to their prejudice against the genuine because of the counterfeit elegance. The cant of literature, like that of religion, is never more disgusting than when it takes the form of the exquisite. Morbid delicacy rasps manly nerves.

Dr. Johnson attributed the success of the Methodists in Great Britain to their revolt from the frigid elegance which was mincingly practiced by the English clergy of his day. Johnson said that the Methodist revolution should be commended by all men of sense. He was right. That revolution was not merely a recoil of piety from worldliness: it was a revolt of English good sense against a literary affectation. That which the Methodist clergy did from religious enthusiasm, literature ought to have done through self-respect.

All this, and more, might be said in defense of the prejudice against elegant discourse. Still, elegance expresses a fact in literary diction. It is a fact no-

where else so essential as in the discourse of the pulpit. Preachers have this practical question to ask and to answer, How are the feminine elements in truth to be expressed? In what language shall we clothe them? What vocabulary, what constructions, what imagery, what of the thousand expedients of style, shall we choose for their equipment? Shall we write with perspicuity? Yes; but perspicuity can not express, for example, the idea of filial trust. Shall we speak with precision? Yes; but precision can not measure the affection of David and Jonathan. Shall we experiment with energy? It should seem so to the eye of the criticism in question. But would you dare to preach an energetic sermon on the text "That disciple whom Jesus loved"? Energy as an expression of the beautiful in thought is like lightning as a specimen of light. How, then, shall the beautiful find outlet in the speech of the pulpit?

Dr. John Owen says of himself, "Know that you have to do with a person, who, provided that his words but clearly express his sentiments, entertains a fixed and absolute disregard of all elegance and ornaments of speech." This sounds well. What is more reasonable? But the difficulty is, that considerably more than half of the proper materials of the pulpit can not be expressed without "elegance and ornaments of speech." What shall we do with them? What, on such a theory, shall we do with more than half of the Bible? Shall we ignore in the pulpit the Psalms of David, Isaiah's visions of the world's closing age, the parables of our Lord, the inspired revelations of heaven, St. Paul's doctrine of immortality, his description of charity? Yet not one of these can be becomingly expressed without "elegance and ornaments of speech." No man can

otherwise preach upon them with any approximation to the inspired spirit in them.

The question becomes one of signal importance to the pulpit, in view of the immense preponderance of beautiful thought within the compass of language. Does not the material world present an obvious ascendency of beauty over force, over sublimity even? The profusion of creative energy is nowhere else seen so clearly as in the sportive production of objects beautiful to the eye. So far as we know, many of them have no other reason for their creation than their passive beauty. Naturalists have conjectured that the more gorgeous species of the butterfly have a sense of beauty which enables them to enjoy the variegated coloring of their own forms. They are believed to rest from their foraging expeditions, on the cool surface of a leaf, in silent and tranquil joy at the magnificence of their expanded wings. So lavish is Nature in its creation of the beautiful, and its provision of the sense of beauty to respond to it through the sentient universe. Is not this emblematic of a similar profusion in the spiritual world? How is it with the perfected forms of human character with which the pulpit has to deal so largely? Which is there in the ascendent, — beauty, or strength? To ask this question is to answer it. Energy we find in savage mind. The ultimate fruitage of culture we sum up under the title of the "refinements of civilization." A ripe mind of evenly balanced sensibilities will discover in the world of thought, which is its mental atmosphere, more of beauty than of any other single quality.

A moral design is obvious in this proportioning of things. It is one with which the pulpit is most vitally concerned. There, more than anywhere else, must the feminine qualities of thought predominate. True, the

pulpit finds immense forces in its materials. It must deal with the grand and the terrific. To meet the emergencies which sin creates, it must often obtrude these into the foreground of its ministrations. It must know the terrors of the Lord if it would persuade men. But, after all, these are elementary forces. They are preparative, not ultimate, in their working. They are, for the most part, destructive of evil, rather than constructive of good. To the results of preaching they are what the geologic cataclysms are to the preparation of the globe for the well-being of man. Those resources of the pulpit which build up men in the varieties and the harmonies of Christlike manhood are chiefly the gentle forces, the winning and the tranquil. Men become what the pulpit would make them, not through fear, but through love, and its auxiliaries in human nature. Truth descends upon them like the rain, and distills like the dew. Light, gravitation, the azure of the sky, are emblems of those resources which the pulpit employs in all its ultimate constructive work on human character.

Test the truth of this. Take the ministry of a faithful and successful pulpit for a period of ten years. Number the sermons delivered in those years of upbuilding. Mark the keynote of their subjects. What was the real constructive power in them? You will find in the inner history of any such ministry that love has been the germinal idea, and beauty the external symbol in the forms of language. Follow such a ministry to its fruitage in one character ripened under its influence. Turn to the memoirs of saints, or, what is more to the purpose, study an unwritten biography in which unconscious sainthood is working itself out; and what do you find there? Shapes, pencilings, hues, shadings of thought and feeling, too delicate for art. What

a countless multitude of these make up the life that is hid with Christ! Behold the lilies of the field, how they grow! The question, then, for the preacher to decide is, How shall such a ministry reach its work, and do it effectually, in any other ways than by forms and combinations of truth in which beauty is the ascendent feature, and, of course, elegance in style is the natural expression?

Note the contrast with a style which shall express the workings of sin in human life and its fruit in human character. Sin is in its very nature turbulent. The style which deals with it tends to violence. Preaching about it suggests a coming tragedy. It craves a rough dialect, and often repulsive imagery. Is there not a keen sense of rhetorical congruity displayed in the choice of the emblem by which Isaiah pictures enormous guilt when he says, "Woe unto them that draw sin as with a *cart-rope*"? Would inspired taste have chosen such an emblem as that to picture the final stages of a godly life like that of the apostle John? Yet holy experience is, in this respect, only one example of what is true of a vast proportion of those rich and choice combinations of truth which form the best themes of the pulpit. Again, therefore, must we press the question, How shall these themes be fitly discussed in sermons? Surely not by the enginery of a forceful diction. Can you picture to an audience the scene of the Last Supper, and the loved disciple leaning on Jesus' bosom, by an abrupt, startling style, jagged in its connections, filled with martial metaphors, resonant with Miltonic periods, or serrated like those of Carlyle, and backed by a fiery delivery, with a clinched fist, a frenzied eye, bellowing tones, and foot planted like that of a pugilist?

The dependence of elegance on delicacy of thought

suggests, further, the true reply to that theoretic error which restricts elegance to ornament. Beauty in discourse interests in proportion to its expression of character. That is not beauty of high order which is not full of character of high order. Often, therefore, the thing which juvenile discourse chiefly needs is to diminish its adornment. Its elegance needs to be brought down to a level with its real character as the herald of thought. Some passages in Wordsworth's poetry, in which he dwells fondly on natural scenery, are dull. They are true to fact; they are polished in form; they are melodious on the lips. A good rehearser of them, on a calm summer's day, would give them in tranquil recitative, which would soothe a tired hearer; but they would not interest an alert one. To such a one they are dull. Why? Because they lack thought proportioned to their elaborateness of form. They fondle commonplaces in the works of Nature: they make as much of an apple-blossom as of a tropical garden. Nothing in literary forms makes the impression of beauty which does not carry thought enough to constitute a certain ballast to the form. Ornament achieves nothing above its own weight in thought.

Nevertheless, profusion of ornament is beautiful if demanded by thought. If the nature of a subject be such that the most characteristic expression of it requires elaborate adornment, that elaborate adornment is beauty. As the material world abounds with such forms of beauty, and as the fine arts are immortalized by them, so does style often express them in language.

Again: the dependence of elegance on delicacy of thought discloses the most radical source of offenses against this quality of style in the unfitness of the thought to elegant utterance. No refinements of style

can beautify that which is intrinsically coarse. Byron's "Don Juan" is not elegant; ingenuities of style can not make it so; no style can conceal its inherent vulgarity.

The form of this defect to which modern preaching is exposed is not an extreme one. It is that of falling but a little below, and yet below, the level of cultivated taste; not so far below as to shock refinement, yet so far as to fail to attract refinement. Of all the subjects of the pulpit, that which is most frequently maltreated by the want of delicate taste is that of our Lord's sufferings and death. I could give you examples if it were desirable to repeat them, but you have doubtless met with them in your experience as listeners to preaching. Devotional feeling has been destroyed by the balancing against it of the cravings of good taste. The biblical narratives of our Lord's physical sufferings need to be handled with an affectionate delicacy of touch. Much of the preaching of our immediate predecessors on that theme can not be now a model for you. Christian thought has made a perceptible progress in the habit of subordinating the physical, and exalting the mental, element in the atoning pains.

No rule can be given, and none is needed. The hint is sufficient, that elaboration of the biblical narrative requires the same delicacy of treatment which one would give to a narrative of the dying agonies of a personal friend. Medical science has collated facts bearing upon the human physiology of Christ, and therefore upon the scenes of the crucifixion and the garden, which are not without interest or pertinence; but I very much doubt the value of them to the service of the pulpit. They are, to say the least, materials of a perilous nature as related to the sensibilities we wish to reach by sacra-

mental sermons. In our most profound conceptions, the infinite tragedy buries itself in an infinite mystery; and there the instinct of good taste would leave it in unfathomed depths.

Not only is coarse thought incapable of elegant expression, but that is not an elegant style in which beauty is attempted in the utterance of thoughts negative to that quality. Some of our materials are not beautiful, yet are not the reverse: they are negative. They lie outside of the range of beauty in language: therefore they are not proper subjects of elegant utterance. Forcibly uttered they may be, or perspicuously uttered, or precisely uttered, but not elegantly uttered. They may be the theme of a demonstration, or of a philosophical argument, or of a philippic, but not of a poem, not of a painting, not of a passage in elegant discourse. When expressed, they ought not to be adorned: the adornment, if attempted, will be a failure. Such is the verdict of good taste upon them.

Dr. Chalmers, for example, in one of his productions, writes of "contemplation" under the figure of "a sensitive maiden flying from his mansion." What for? It is for the noise of his door-bell. Is this a beautiful expression of the fact that he could not think well when disturbed by a clatter at the street-door? Surely not; and why not? Simply because the idea had no beauty in it: it could not support imagery; it had no wings; least of all could it lift itself gracefully on the wings of an allegorical angel. Didactic preaching is sometimes tempted to the error of imposing beauty on ideas negative to that quality by the desire to avoid commonplace. In didactic remark the problem of the pen is to make it interesting. Dry fact lies at one extreme, false ornament at the other. Commonplace

imagery is perhaps more frequently perpetrated for this reason than for any other.

Macaulay notices it as one of the signs of the decay of art, that ornament is misplaced in the choice of its objects. The same error indicates imperfect culture in literature. A writer has gained one of the prime requisites of a good style when he has acquired the courage to say what he has to say, and then trust his own work. If clear, didactic statement is all that the thought demands, then clear, didactic statement let it be. Take the risk of being commonplace. Never tack on gold-lace in the attempt to improve linsey-woolsey.

Again: that is not an elegant style in which beauty of form is excessive in degree. Often, as has been before remarked, a speaker's thought is not weighty enough to sustain elaborated style of any kind, and, least of all, elaborated imagery. Architects tell us, that a small specimen of the Gothic architecture is of necessity in bad taste. No matter how perfectly finished, it can not be good art. The reason they give is, that the profusion of ornament which the Gothic order requires can not be compressed into a small area. It must have vast spaces, massive pillars, huge vaults in the ceiling, immense windows, prolonged distances in nave and transept. Every thing about it must be congruous with the grand and the magnificent. Therefore a Gothic cathedral in miniature is a contradiction. So it is often with the expression of thought in language. Profuse embellishment must be supported by a certain bulk of thought, so that the thought shall be felt through the ornate and fanciful style, or the ultimate effect will be finical. In the pulpit especially, good taste is jealous for the dignity of thought. It demands that never the slightest sacrifice of that dignity shall be made to embellishment of external forms.

Further: the forms of beauty in style may be neutralized by improbable conjecture in the materials of thought. There was a profound rhetorical principle in Bossuet's apothegm: "Nothing is beautiful but truth." Why are fairy-stories unimpressive to adult minds? Because the intrinsic untruthfulness in fact overbalances all possible elegance of form. The final impression is frivolous. To children the fairy-fiction is delightful, because of the immensity of a child's power of "make-belief." Men are not thus fascinated, because they have outlived the age of such faith: they parted with it when they dropped the game of marbles. Even "The Arabian Nights" interests us chiefly as an historic monument of an Oriental and childish civilization. As a work of art, it makes no profound impression on the modern and Occidental taste. Who cares for Aladdin's "Lamp" by the side of Scott's "Ivanhoe," or Hawthorne's "Scarlet Letter"?

A preacher's chief temptation to the error now before us is in the form of advancing with excessive freedom conjectures respecting the future life. Beyond a certain temperate and conservative degree, indulgence of religious conjecture offends a perfect taste. Such discourse does not find its place in smooth congruity with things known to faith; and therefore it jars upon a refined æsthetic feeling. No graces of diction on the outside of such conjectures can soothe the sense of violence done to truth by morbid or reckless guess-work.

The foundation of elegance in delicacy of thought suggests, further, that we must find the fundamental means of cultivating this quality in the cultivation of refinement of perception. Refinement in our habits of thinking, the habit of dwelling upon the beautiful in literature, distinguishing varieties of beauty, studying

illustrations of beauty in external nature, observing analogies between the beautiful in nature and art and the beautiful in language, genial criticism of the best poetry, studious enjoyment of the best imagery in prose, attention to minutiæ of style in which elegance of construction chiefly appears: in short, any and every exercise of mind which brings into chastened play that sensibility to the beautiful which every mind possesses, will refine our taste, and make our perceptions of beauty truthful and prompt.

As there is a *state* of mental energy in production, so there is a state of culture in which the perception and the use of objects and literary forms of beauty shall become habitual in one's mental working. This is the improvement which those need chiefly whose style is deficient in elegance. It is not the acquisition of a stock of illustrative materials: it is something yet to be developed in their mental constitution, — to be developed, I say, not to be created. It is a permanent state of mental culture, which shall be to style what a cultivated ear is to music.

This leads us to observe, that all preachers may possess it. It is a growth of that of which the germ exists in every mind. No man can escape it who aims persistently at any thing like concinnity of culture. That is a fiction which some youthful writers entertain, that their minds are not fitted to the cultivation of those qualities which beauty in style represents. Clear writers they may become, forcible writers, precise writers, prolific writers perhaps, but not elegant writers. "The graces of rhetoric," says one such preacher, "are not for me." He narrows his culture, and contracts the range of his power in public speech immensely, who subjects himself to any such restriction. The elements which refined

taste imparts to oral speech are no more "the graces of rhetoric" than those which energy imparts are the forces of rhetoric. They are graces of mind, innate in every mind, susceptible of growth in every mental life, inevitable to any mind which is disciplined by prolonged and symmetrical culture.

2. The dependence of elegance of style on delicacy gives rise also to a second demand, — that of delicacy of expression in the utterance of thought. Beauty in thought is more difficult of expression than energy in thought: it requires a more sensitive discrimination of the significance of language. An elegant style, therefore, demands a more choice selection and arrangement of words. This obvious principle has also significant corollaries.

It suggests, in the first place, a large class of offenses against elegance in style. They are that class which results, not from unfitness of thought, but from inelegant language. The choice of a vocabulary may disclose these defects. Words have their aristocracy. Some have a noble birth; a magnificent history lies behind them; they were born amidst the swelling and the bursting into life of great ideas. On the contrary, there are words which have plebeian associations. Some are difficult of enunciation; and, by a secret sympathy, the mind attaches to them the distortion, perhaps the pain, of the vocal organs in their utterance. A single uncouth word may be to style what an uncontrollable grimace is to the countenance. Neither is a thing of beauty. Words not inelegant in themselves become so through pedestrian associations which colloquial usage affixes to them. Our Yankee favorite "guess" is a perfectly good word, pure English, of good stock, and long standing in the language. A better word, in itself

considered, we have not in English use. But because it is a colloquial favorite, used by everybody, on every variety of subject and occasion, and often in a degraded sense, as in the compound "guess-work," it has become vulgar in the sense of "common;" so that in many connections in which the real meaning of it would be entirely pertinent, the word would be inelegant. "Conjecture," or some equivalent, must take its place.

Wordsworth's poetry, again, is not wholly defensible from the charge of using in poetic measure an inelegant vocabulary. He believed in the poetry of common things, common thoughts, common people, and their common affairs. It was the aim of his life to lift up into the atmosphere of romance things lowly and obscure. "The Excursion" wrought in this respect one of the silent revolutions of literature in the direct interest of Christianity. But, in his attempt to effect that revolution, he did lean to an extreme. Even his regal imagination could not dignify such lines as these; viz.: —

> "A household tub, like one of those
> Which women use to wash their clothes."

But an objector inquires, and perhaps with half-suppressed indignation, "Is it not good English? and, if so, must we drop it because it is not elegant?" I answer yes to both queries. It is good English, yet not good poetry. If the idea is to be expressed at all in poetry, — and I do not deny that it may be so expressed as to escape criticism, — it must be by such a choice of language as shall conceal the steam and the soap of a washtub under some euphemism which shall be to the idea what the rainbow, which is sometimes seen over a washtub, is to that very necessary but homely article of

household use. When beauty is to be expressed, we must have a choice vocabulary. If Thomas Hood could, by "The Song of the Shirt," throw a poetic halo over a very humble article of his daily toilet, why may not his equal do the same service for the weekly laundry? But not by the extreme literalism of Wordsworth's vocabulary.

Constructions, also, are exposed to peril of inelegance. Certain varieties of them impress us, first and last and always, with their want of ease; and, no ease, no beauty. It is as difficult to define them as to create them, yet illustration by examples would tax your patience beyond endurance. Few things are so unutterably dull as specimens of faulty construction in discourse, unless they are of the comic sort; and those would not be to the present purpose. Perhaps the following hints will be sufficient to recall them to you in your reading.

One is the bungling construction of dependent clauses. These are huddled together, and seem to tumble over each other. Mellifluous utterance of them is impracticable. They are the despair of the elocutionist. They seem as if the sole ambition of the writer had been to be able to say, as De Quincey said of the German sentence, "They are all there." Another is the military sentence. The materials march out as if on drill. They drop into rank too knowingly to be lively. Excess of order is never beautiful, because never lifelike. Another is the misplaced or excessive inversion of structure. The thoughts appear to move like a crab; are dragged forth, — the first last, and the last first, and all looking the wrong way, — after the manner of the stolen oxen backing into the cave of Cacus. Another is the dislocated structure. Connectives are either absent, or misplaced, or meaningless. The style jolts, like an uneasy vehicle on corduroy roads.

These constructions may be sufficiently perspicuous. They are often consistent with a good degree of energy. Cromwell's speeches are full of them. Yet he made himself understood, and so well understood that the English Parliament did not care to ask him what he meant a second time. But such constructions are not elegant. There is no comeliness in them. It would be a hard task to set Cromwell's speeches to the measure of a chant, or even to make an Italian, with vocal organs trained to the most euphonious language in the world, rehearse them at all.

A similar defect betrays itself in *inelegance of imagery.* Imagery is painting in words: any blemish impairs its beauty. Therefore coarse imagery can not express beauty in thought. Imagery the picture of which disgusts the mind's eye degrades the thought it represents. This is sometimes the designed effect. Macaulay designs it when he says, "After the Restoration, peerages were sold at Whitehall scarcely less openly than asparagus at Covent Garden, or herrings at Billingsgate." The image of an English coronet side by side with a bunch of asparagus and a red herring paints the degradation of the peerage as no literal description could. But Jeremy Taylor wrought the same effect, though undesignedly, when he compared the sufferings of Christ to "an umbrella," because "men used them to shelter unholy living."

For the same reason, *commonplace* in imagery can not express, and still less can it impress, the beautiful in thought. A metaphor elegantly impressive when it was new may degrade an idea now because of its excessive use. Imagery wears out, as the gloss of silk does. The metaphor of the pebble, which creates ever-widening rings when dropped into the water, is an example. Few

figures of speech bear criticism better than this. When it was original, it can scarcely have had its superior for beauty or suggestiveness. But does the memory of man go back to the time when it was original? It is exhausted: it needs to be allowed to slumber in oblivion. It should be disused till a future age shall reinvent it. So powerful is originality in pictured speech, that it will often ennoble a commonplace thought. A conception which we had ceased to feel the force of because of our monotonous familiarity with it, an original figure will often uplift, somewhat as death hallows in our memory a commonplace character.

Again: *unfinished* imagery can not express beauty in thought. A metaphor unsustained, and therefore incomplete, conveys no impression of elegance. Yet, on the other hand, *finical* imagery is equally powerless. To be overwrought changes imagery to finery. The impression is that of pettiness, not of beauty. What is the defect in the message of the martyr Ridley to his fellow-sufferer Hooper as they were going to the stake?—"We have been two in white: let us be one in red!" It speaks something for the nerve of a man, that he can crack his joke within sight of the pile which will soon shrivel his tongue to a cinder. But what can we say for the good taste of a man who can so treat such a death? We might expect it from a hunter in the backwoods, in view of Indian torture, but not from a bishop of the Church of England.

Further: *mongrel* imagery does not express beauty. Above all things else, beauty is self-consistent. Incongruity is death to it. At an international exhibition of the industrial arts in Vienna, I once saw the figure of a kneeling Samuel, of the size of life, molded of castile-soap. Why was it not "a thing of beauty"? Yet is

Bishop Heber more successful in his attempt to improve the magnificent imagery of Milton? Milton sees in poetic vision "the gates of heaven on golden hinges turning." Why is it that Heber fails, when he attempts to save himself from plagiarism by representing the gates of heaven as "rolling back on their starry hinges"?

Before leaving this class of offenses against elegance in style, it is worthy of remark, that, by avoiding them, a certain degree of beauty may be infused into other qualities of style. The polish of a steel blade contributes to the keenness of its edge: so elegance may enhance perspicuity, or precision, or energy of language. True, in such a combination, elegance is subordinate. The style is not constructed for it; the blade is not made for the polish: but, as a tributary, it serves the purposes of other qualities of style. An air of elegance may be imparted to the most forcible style by the choice of a select vocabulary, by finish of construction, and by a delicate congruity of imagery. Energy is not always convulsive. What was the defect of the style of an eminent preacher in Maine, who, speaking of men's rejection of Christ, said that "they treated him as they would a rotten apple"? It surely was not obscurity; it was not weakness: it was a want of that sensitive taste which ought to breathe its delicate sense of fitness into the plainest phraseology and the roughest imagery.

In the works of nature, it is remarkable how often force and beauty are ranged side by side. In their impression on the beholder, they often intermingle. Flowers skirt the bases of volcanoes: rainbows grace the retiring thunder-storms. In the Falls of Niagara, the predominance of beauty or of sublimity depends on the mood of the spectator, both are so affluent in their dis-

play. Charles Dickens expressed the experience of the majority of thoughtful travelers in looking upon them, when he said, after giving utterance to his overpowering sense of their sublimity, that the final and permanent impression of them, which would live in his memory, was that of their beauty. Would not this be almost the sole impression made by them upon the mind of a deaf man, to whom they would present a picture only, not modified by the sound of mighty waters?

Similar combinations of energy and elegance are found in human character. The choicest characters always contain them. The world's perfect ideal of a man is that of a *gentle-man*. Coleridge remarked, that he had never met with a truly great man who had not a large infusion of feminine qualities. One is impressed by the truth of the sentiment in reading the memoir of Daniel Webster. The ideal which history gives us of a military character is one in which gentleness adorns the heroic graces. The Christian ideal of manly force is that of executive power wreathed with passive virtues. The same blending of opposites is seen in the best materials of thought for the work of the pulpit. That which we call the "force of truth" is often the more forceful for being tempered and adorned with the feminine qualities of thought, and therefore with the elegant graces of expression. They are best expressed by a select vocabulary, by finished constructions, and by congruous imagery.

The fact is worthy of special mention, that the cultivation of a taste for beauty in style is promoted by a study of the Old Testament. Dr. Henry More says that "a man of confined education, but of good parts, by constant reading of the Bible will naturally form a more winning and commanding rhetoric than those who

are learned." This is specially true of those elements of colloquial dialect which involve an exercise of the imagination. It was remarked by the friends of Professor Stuart, that, after he had reached the age of sixty years, the effect of his study of the Hebrew Scriptures was seen in a manifest quickening of his fancy. He was in this respect more youthful in his old age than in his early manhood. His daily chanting of a Hebrew Psalm in his study as a prelude to the labor of the day infused a glow of beauty into his written pages.

You will observe the same effect of the Scriptures often in the style of extemporaneous prayer. Unconsciously, one acquires from reverent familiarity with the Bible, and specially with its more ancient records, a certain aptness and finish of devotional dialect which no expedient of rhetorical art can achieve so well. The perfection of liturgic style is the fruit of a mature Christian experience regulated in its liturgic expression by a profound biblical taste. It is not the mechanical use of biblical quotation by the sheer lift of memory, but the creation of one's own style and the expression of one's own individuality by inspiration from biblical taste. If you wish to become master of the richest forms of public prayer, do not seek them chiefly in printed liturgies. Seek them in the precative and the lyric style of the Bible and in the unconscious imitation of it by eminent saints. Aged Christians are often models of power in public prayer, chiefly because of their unconscious utterance of a profound religious life under the sway of biblical ideals, which to them may be the only ideals they know of lofty intellectual culture. One of the most inspiring leaders in social prayer that I ever knew was a plain sea-captain, whose almost only literary possession was the Bible.

The views here presented of the value of a refined taste to the style of the pulpit need to be balanced by a notice of the fact that luxuriousness of taste results in languor of style. This is the chief peril of a studied beauty in the forms of language. Composition is an art. Elegant composition is a fine art. But it is liable to this abuse: a fastidious taste attenuates thought. The style which grows out of it tends to elaborated feebleness through its expression of morbid sensibilities. Dr. Arnold, for example, says, of the closing lines of Wordsworth's Ode on Immortality —

> "To me the meanest flower that breathes can give
> Thoughts that do often lie too deep for tears" —

that they are not founded upon a genuine Christian taste. He contends, that, in such a world as this, the Christian theory of life does not foster such exquisite sensibility towards such inferior objects. A hectic beauty is not natural beauty; neither is the style prompted by a sickly taste the style of the most manly Christian thought.

National literatures, so far as we can trace the stages of their decline, die first at this point of effeminate taste. Softening of the national brain begins in the organ of ideality. Violent death never comes upon a great literature in its adult strength. Barbarian irruptions, usurpations in government, and the conflagration of libraries, have come upon nations after literary decline has begun to show itself. The fatal and often the first clear sign that a nation deserves and is doomed to receive such visitations appears in the breaking-out of a diseased luxuriousness of taste in its literature, after a period of high culture. One part in the literary mission of Christianity is to rescue literature from this ten

dency to disease. This it does by widening the reach of cultured intellect, deepening the intensity of the educated sensibilities, and thus rectifying the standards of taste, and purifying and vitalizing taste itself. We must look for revolutions of literary opinion as Christianity advances in its sway over human thought. No æsthetic culture will live finally but that which is Christian in its models. Educated Christian mind, therefore, should be constantly feeling its way upward. The world's literary future should be anticipated with a trust like that of the old Hebrew Messianic forethought.

LECTURE XVIII.

ELEGANCE OF STYLE; DEPENDENT ON VIVIDNESS, ON VARIETY.

II. THE analysis of beauty in a previous Lecture leads us to consider elegance of style as dependent, in the second place, on the element of *vividness*.

Is vagueness of impression ever desirable in the expression of thought by language? I answer, it is sometimes a necessity, but never where beauty of impression is the chief aim of the discourse. Always a greater or less degree of vividness enters into our sense of the beautiful. Why is a diamond the most beautiful of gems? Why is it the only gem of which use never tires? Dealers in precious stones say that the popular taste for it never even wavers. It is always salable, and is the standard by which the value of other gems is estimated. Yet the diamond has no beauty but its brilliancy. The human eye is the most vital organ in producing the impression of beauty in a human countenance, because it is the most vivid object in the countenance. Poets describe the sun as the "golden eye" of the heavens. The eye suggests life: it *is* life. All varieties of beauty in the eye possess this quality. The languid eye with drooping eyelash, if it expresses beauty, is never dull. It may represent life in repose, but still, life: no beauty of countenance fascinates if it is blurred by a dull eye. A corresponding principle appertains to thought as expressed in language. Vividness, in degree

less or greater, is essential to all expression of beauty in human speech.

Yet, pursuing the analysis a little farther, we find that beauty does not demand or admit of vividness in the superlative degree. The brilliancy of an insane eye is not beautiful: it rather startles or affrights the beholder, as the lightning does, and for a similar reason. It is not easy to define the degree of vividness beyond which beauty vanishes. In some cases, that degree is very great. We have a definite and truthful idea when we speak of magnificent beauty, of gorgeous beauty, of dazzling beauty, of resplendent beauty. These, and their equivalents in our vocabulary, indicate the common consent to the consistency of very great vividness of impression with beauty in effect. But there is a line at which vividness passes over from the realm of the beautiful to that of the forcible or the sublime, and, in its extreme, to that of the terrific.

Perhaps a sufficiently definite qualification of the vividness which beauty demands is to say, that it must be such as shall consist with that delicacy of impression which we have seen to be an equal element of beauty in discourse. In the most overpowering beauty we shall find something which tempers vividness with refinement. In a tropical flower of high-wrought coloring we shall find refinement of texture, or gracefulness of outline, or delicacy in the shading of colors, or prismatic reflection of tints in the sunlight, — something which screens our taste from the gairish effulgence of intense colors upon the eye: otherwise we do not call it beautiful, but gaudy. The same combination of principles holds good in style. Vividness of thought in high degree, yet such degree as shall consist with delicate impression on the whole, is the requisition of beauty.

The bearing of these principles upon elegance of style will be seen in several inferences.

1. We infer the obvious truth that elegance demands distinctness of thought. To some minds, whose conception of force is adequate to a strong style, the whole idea of beauty is hazy. It comes to their consciousness through an uncultivated instinct. Hence it is, that juvenile attempts at the beautiful in language often result in crowded symbols which suggest only general ideas, and these diffusely, perhaps tautologically. Similes and metaphors, and rotund words, and rhythmical constructions, are heaped into a page without stint, not because a definite beauty of conception is so refracted and multiplied to the mind's eye as to demand such a variety of elegant forms, but because a misty notion of that beauty is in the writer's mind, and he hastens to give it shape by the patches of finery which he has on hand. It is one of the thousand deformities of style in which form alone is made to do the work of thought. The hollowness of it rings in the ear of a discerning critic. The only adequate corrective of such a defect is nothing more nor less than intenser thinking. The writer is not yet master of his work. He has not discovered the original of the image which has charmed him in his dream. He does not know whether it is an angel, or a woman, or a mermaid.

2. From the necessity of vividness to beauty in speech, we infer further the necessity of sensitiveness of feeling to those varieties of eloquence in which the beautiful predominates. As energy in style demands force of feeling, elegance demands sensitiveness of feeling. Both are founded on the same principle. The thing expressed must find its kindred in the emotive condition of the writer. No man can write vividly who

does not write with feeling of some kind. But there is a vast difference between the feeling of one who is tormented by a truth, and that of one who broods over a truth affectionately, or carries on a mental play with it.

Are there not some preachers who impress you chiefly with a sense of the hardness of their natures? Their discourses may be solid, packed with thought, loaded with latent force; yet they seem to grind like a millstone. The defect in such preachers is in their emotive nature. They have no play of sensibility, no wavelets of feeling, none of the tell-tale of a mobile countenance. Their style betrays all this on the principle of Buffon, that the style of a man is the man himself. President Grant disclosed this cast of mind, when at the World's Jubilee in Boston, after listening to the most illustrious musicians of the age, he said that the most melodious thing he had heard there was the artillery.

Ministers of this mold are seldom or never great preachers. They may be great as men of affairs, wise on committees, forceful in executive miscellanies; but they have too much wisdom, and too little of emotive spontaneousness, to be great preachers. So far as my observation goes, men noted for their reticence are not mighty in the pulpit. Certain powers which enter into all eloquence are reticent in them there. Such men are seldom versatile in illustrative preaching. Close reasoners they may be in argumentative preaching; but for the want of mobile sensibilities, which express themselves in pictorial forms of speech, they are doomed to be uninteresting, and therefore their argument can not get a hearing. Delicate and winsome discourse is not possible to such men in their present state of culture. He that winneth souls is not of that make.

It will be instructive to observe the singular analogy

which exists in this respect between the work of the pulpit and that of the fine arts. Painters and sculptors say that beauty in their arts is the most difficult thing to execute well. It is far more easy to represent on canvas or in marble great energy of character or of action than to represent equally great beauty. Scores of artists can execute Centaurs and Laocoöns, where one can execute a Venus. The dog Cerberus can be pictured by many a pencil which could not portray the meeting of Orpheus and Eurydice. So is it in the kindred art of poetry. The most marvelous creations of Shakspeare are his feminine characters. Othello is more easily drawn than Desdemona.

3. From the necessity of vividness to beauty we infer, again, the value of original thought as the material of elegance in style. Thought which a writer feels to be his own, he will most readily express with sensitive emotion. Even commonplace thought is made vivid by fresh emotion in the speaker. Let commonplaces be so worked over in the mind of the preacher that his sensibility to them is quickened to a new degree of exercise, and that freshness of sensibility becomes, in its effect on style, the equivalent of originality. Oral discourse has in this respect an obvious advantage over written style. It gives a speaker opportunity to throw the whole force of the *man* into his utterances.

Here lies the secret of the power of some preachers in handling the least exciting topics of religion. The great majority of the themes of the pulpit border on the commonplace in the hearing of a Christianized people. The best themes, those which the people need most imperatively, are not novelties: they are the old truths, the old doctrines, the old duties, the old texts. That class of preachers possess a great gift, who can

infuse into these time-worn verities the originality of revelations. The value of a profound and varied religious experience is discovered in such preaching; and this especially in its treatment of the more delicate conceptions of religious truth. The majority of such conceptions have their origin in the personal experience of some believer. The biblical forms of them were inspired through the medium of a personal religious life. We owe them largely to the failures, the sins, the chastisements, the struggles, the penitence, the faith, the joy, of holy men. They speak with power *to* a similar experience in all ages; and, to speak thus from the pulpit, they need to speak through a corresponding personal experience of the preacher. A most profound but much neglected principle of power in preaching is this occult affinity of the *man* in the pulpit with the *man* in the inspired message. The more sensitive that affinity is, the more absolute is a preacher's mastery of those refinements of truth which enter the hearts of men as the dawn illumines their homes. The power of such preaching is a still power, but it has no superior among all the arts of public speech. For the want of it, some preachers never rise above the level of argument and hortation. Their argument is dry, and their hortation stale.

4. From the necessity of vividness as an element of beauty, we infer further, as a general fact, the necessity of simplicity of language to an elegant style. No other quality than beauty makes such an imperative demand for transparency. One of the most invariable concomitants of beauty in language is the absence of all appearance of effort. It is the production of a mind at ease. Why are the biblical narratives such perfect specimens of elegance in historic style? The fact is

often observed, that the evangelists, in their reminiscences of our Lord, never employ a commendatory epithet in description of his person. Contrast, in this respect, St. John with Homer. Beauty is the offspring of leisure. The writer seems not to go in search of, or to struggle for, any thing: he takes and gives what comes to him.

But the necessity of simplicity to elegant expression is a general principle: it has exceptions. Profusion and intricacy of beauty in thought have their correlatives in style. The usual canons of criticism respecting simplicity must be accepted with qualifications. A cultivated taste recoils so sensitively from an affected style, that it often expresses its demand for a simple diction in hyperbole.

EXCURSUS.

A brief *excursus* is pertinent here, on the usage of literary criticism in its commendation of the style of Addison. For a century past, critics have never wearied of lauding the calm, lucid, pure, colloquial simplicity of "The Spectator." In the main they have been right; but their *dictum* has become extreme in becoming exclusive. Addison followed, in the history of English style, a class of writers who had nauseated manly taste by their magniloquence. They were conceited in thought, and stilted in expression. The advent of Addison gave relief to the literary mind of England by his homelike and sincere diction, similar to that which a hearer feels when a natural speaker follows a bombastic one. The consequence was, that Addison so fascinated readers as to carry them over to the opposite extreme of literary taste. His noble connections, also, and his official rank, lent an artificial glamour to his example; and, from that

day to this, his style has been pressed upon the study of youthful writers as a model without exception, and almost without a rival. No other name in English literature is adduced so often in rhetorical criticism as that of a master of English style. He has been held up to admiration and to imitation with an exclusiveness of praise which no man's style has ever deserved, or, in the nature of things can deserve.

In the first place, Addison's style is the style of an author, not of an orator; a fact wholly overlooked in the general drift of criticism upon his works. Again: as the style of an author, it is but one style, a representative style, indeed, but still one only, and by no means unlimited in its range of adaptations. No style can be universally and unexceptionably good. Addison's is no more unconditionally a good model than that of Dr. Johnson, with which it is commonly contrasted. No preacher can gain a very broad mastery of expression in the pulpit who forms his style on the model of Addison alone. In oral address the style of Addison is apt to degenerate into colloquial platitudes. He seldom, if ever, wrote on subjects which admitted of intensity of diction: at least, he never wrote intensely. He had not an intense mind: he entertained no intense convictions. Truth never tormented him to give it utterance.

Specially, in the expression of complicated beauty, the model which Addison illustrates is almost sure to become, in the mouth of a preacher, unsuggestive, and therefore dull. Beauty is often intricate in combinations, and gorgeous in its display. The Greek mind expressed its conception of this by the Corinthian order of columnar architecture. There is a style in composition, and specially in oratory, which has this Corinthian

beauty; and it is a style of which scarcely an illustration can be found in Addison's writings. This Corinthian style some critics would pronounce florid, yet it abounds in the works of nature. The pencilings and shapes of foliage, the hues of flowers, the architecture of trees, the configuration of clouds, the sculpture of stalactites in caves, reproduce that of which the Corinthian column and its elaborated capital, with its fine tracery of the olive-leaf or acanthus, were the expression to the Greek sense of beauty. Are these florid? Human ideality repeats the same thing in painting and sculpture and music. Why should not language, indeed, why must it not, picture and carve and build the same conception of beauty in elaborate mechanism of style? It is a mechanism which yet is no mechanism, but a growth, because it springs from intuitions which must express themselves so, or be dumb.

5. From the dependence of beauty on vividness of style, we infer, yet again, the importance of an easy command of imagery to an elegant style. The origin of alphabetic writing suggests the necessity of imagery to vivid speech. The first form of written language known to history was the hieroglyph. So the vividness of written language at present depends very much upon the relics of the hieroglyphic element which still remain in every language, and upon the imitations of it originated by authors in the form of more elaborate imagery. Write in pictures, and you can not fail to write vividly. Imagery is essential to vivid expression, specially because the vividness of beauty must be felt intuitively, not derived by reflective process. It must reach the mind, as vision does, by a process which gives no sense of duration.

III. The third element named in our analysis of

beauty leads us to consider elegance of style as *dependent on variety.*

Hogarth's theory of the "line of beauty" depended largely upon this element of variety. In what does the beauty of a curve consist? I can discern in it nothing definable, other than variety and proportion. A straight line may have proportion, but it is monotonous. The curve adds variety, and this results in the elementary figure which artists declare to be inherent in all beauty of form. A serpentine path, the careering of a bird in the air, Connecticut River as seen from Mount Holyoke, the Rhine as seen from the Castle of Godesberg, — these, as examples of figure and motion, are all emblems of beauty to which the rudest nature responds. The rainbow, the shifting of clouds at sunset, the plumage of a peacock, a mobile countenance, — these, as specimens of color, are emblems of beauty; yet not one of them would excite our sense of the beautiful without its variety. Music also, as an example of beauty in sound, can not exist without variety. A drum has none except in time; and how much beauty does a drum suggest?

The same principle governs style. Monotony, even of that which is in itself an excellence, destroys the beauty of it. One critic defines the whole art of composing as the art of varying thought skillfully. Cutlers tell us, that the keenest razor will lose its temper, or whatever that is which gives it the susceptibility of taking an edge, if it is never allowed a period of disuse. No sharpening process will perfect it for use till it has for a while been at rest. Hair-dressers observe the phenomenon, and describe it by saying that razors get tired, as the hand does which wields them. So is it with the rarest and keenest excellence in style: same-

ness blunts it, in spite of the ingenuity expended upon repairs.

1. How can variety of style be most readily acquired as a habit of the pen? I answer, first, in sympathy with what has been already said, that variety of style must have its foundation in versatility of thought. Thought in a versatile mind may compel variety in its utterance. On the contrary, thought in a commonplace mind may be so monotonous, that no art can create variety in its expression. Utterance must be what the mind is which thinks it.

De Quincey illustrates this concisely in a criticism of the prose-style of Milton. He says, "Milton is too slow, solemn, and continuous. . . . He 'polonaises,' with a grand Castilian air, in paces too sequacious and processional. Even in his passages of merriment . . . his thought and his imagery appear to move to the music of the organ." This want of versatile movement does not detract from the energy of the Miltonic style, but it obliterates the sense of beauty. A certain degree of agility is essential to the utterance of beauty. Even the azure of the sky would appeal rather to our sense of the sublime than to our sense of the beautiful, if it were never varied by day and night, by dawn and twilight, by storm and sunshine, and by varieties of season. So in style, that which momentarily is most beautiful ceases to be so if it never varies. We should tire of rainbows if they arched the heavens incessantly.

May it not have been one cause of the beauty of the Greek language and literature, that they grew up among a people who were passionately fond of the drama? "They left," says one critic, "for the world's admiration, theaters, while the Romans left amphitheaters." The love of the drama permeated the very structure of the Greek tongue, as it did the Greek taste.

For the uses of the pulpit, the following suggestions deserve notice. The elegance of a discourse as a unique structure is promoted by variety in the method of discussion, by variety of divisions in form and substance, by variety in recapitulations of argument, by variety in applications. Any prolonged discourse requires variation in the keynote of the thought. Argument unmixed with illustration, poetic aspects of truth in unbroken succession, declamation unmingled with didactic remark, are too wearisome to please the sense of beauty. Thought in the most brilliant pictures, unrelieved by passages of repose, satiates the sense of beauty. A traveler in Europe soon grows weary, and therefore undiscerning, in exploring rapidly a choice gallery of art. Its profusion of beauty becomes monotonous, and therefore antagonistic to its own meaning. Mind sympathizes with the weariness of the eye. Similar is the effect of that style of discourse of which a gallery of pictures is the emblem.

It is not unworthy of inspiration to believe, that, in the construction of the Bible, God had a special object in view in the versatility of mind, the variety of ages, the diversity of national conditions and temperaments, the multiplicity of historic crises, and the range of subjects, which are wrought into the composition of the volume. A book which should have been a unit in all these particulars, rigidly compact and iron-bound, could not possibly have been so valuable for the purposes of a revelation from heaven as the Scriptures are as we find them. That they are Scriptures, instead of Scripture, is a most significant feature in their history and their destiny.

If but few directions could be given for the intellectual culture of a preacher, one of the few should

surely be this: Cultivate mental versatility. Read a versatile literature. Read other things than sermons. Write other productions than sermons. Write reviews, essays, colloquies, speeches for the platform. Even tales and dramas may widen the range of a preacher's pen. Think much outside of professional channels. Think variously and broadly within the channels of the profession. Preach to various classes of minds. Preach to both sexes, to all conditions of social life, to all ages, on all varieties of biblical themes, in all methods of oral discourse, and to all diversities of Christian experience. Keep out of mental ruts by an intellectual regimen which shall make the formation of such ruts impossible.

One of the pastors of the city of New York, forty years ago, conceived the idea, early in his ministry, that he could not preach to children. That notion, with its corollaries, was a blight upon his whole ministerial life. It was a mental concession of many other things than the one it expressed. It involved a self-exclusion from a large range of thought and subject and style and feeling, which crippled his ministry at vital points at which success was indispensable. It was like wearing a spiked collar or a crape veil through a lifetime. For twenty years he preached to a diminutive audience, whose purses alone kept him in his place. The very last sermon that he published indicated, in its style and structure, the professional rut of a lifetime, which required precisely the discipline of preaching to children to break it up and remove it.

2. That variety which elegance requires demands, also, a varied vocabulary and construction. In this respect the most essential requisite is a thorough command of the synonyms of the language, and the history

of its literature. Good taste revolts from the constant yet needless recurrence of the same word or the same collocation of words. Inelegances of construction are easily corrected if attention is given to them: they are the fruit of heedless composing. The following are the chief of them; viz., monotony in the length of sentences, in the manner of beginning and ending sentences, in the connections of the emphatic and dependent clauses of sentences, in transitions, in the use of affirmative, negative, interrogative, and antithetic structures, in the use of personal and impersonal pronouns, in the use of the direct and the inverted orders of sentences, in the use of some favorite peculiarity of construction not easily definable by criticism.

One form of favorite mechanism in construction is that in which a regular succession occurs, like the swing of a pendulum. In other instances in which one feels the sense of monotony, but can not at once detect the cause, it is found, on a closer scrutiny, that the sentences have more than two variations, but they occur in one invariable order, with the sameness of a treadmill. Dr. Johnson's style sometimes falls into this monotone in mechanism. Hazlitt criticises it, saying that to read or hear such passages from Johnson's writings is as bad as being at sea in a calm, in which one feels the everlasting monotony of the ground-swell. Charles Dickens sometimes falls under the tyranny of his ear in composing; and then his style assumes an arbitrary succession of a few constructions, in which thought is subordinated to euphony of expression. A roll and a swell and a return, in the *boom* of the style, if I may speak so incongruously, destroy the sense of every thing but the sound. One is tempted to chant the passage.

Minute criticism of construction sometimes discloses a curious sympathy with certain geometrical figures, so regular is the succession of triple, quadruple, quintuple clauses, so many and no more, in what De Quincey calls the *packing* of a sentence. The passage reads or sounds as if the author were executing a fantastic wager, or had a vow to perform in honor of a triangle or a pentagon.

Criticism of defects like these may seem like trifling. But often some kind of arbitrary mechanism like these, not always obvious at a glance, renders discourse ungainly, and therefore wearisome, when the thought, if we have patience to evolve it from its diagram, is full of that material which demands elegant expression. The human mind is desperately fond of routine. Make a groove for it in which it may run by the force of acquired momentum, and it will run on for ever without change, and therefore soon without life. This is true, from the most vital thought of immortal being down to the word which drops from the point of the pen. In the least, as in the greatest, nothing kills out life like uniformity. In one aspect of it, the whole discipline of humanity is aimed at the dislodgement of mind from deadly routine. Change, to the degree of infinite variety, is the eternal law of life. It pervades the philosophy of style, as it does every other expression of intellectual being.

3. Furthermore: that variety which beauty of style requires involves variety of illustration. This suggestion opens a boundless field of criticism. We can traverse it but very rapidly, noting only the most essential principles. Generally, repetition of the same illustration in similar connections should be avoided. If the illustration be a bad one, or an indifferent one, it does

not deserve repetition: if it be a good one, repetition betrays the author's estimate of it as such, and has the look of vanity. In either case, an elegant taste is offended. Write rather as if you were unconscious of the quality of your style, and as if your mind were rich in its abundance of illustrative stores.

Study variety of illustration by a command of variety of sources. An old homiletic rule used to be, that a preacher should illustrate from no source but the Scriptures. Strange is it that it never seems to have occurred to the advocates of that rule, that the whole force of biblical example is against it. The writers of the New Testament did not limit themselves to the Old Testament in illustration of truth. Our Lord employed the works of nature for the purpose more frequently than the "law and the prophets." Indeed, for what service are the works of nature designed, if not to illustrate spiritual truths? Why do innumerable analogies thread the material universe, if not to aid the intelligent universe in its knowledge of the Creator of both?

Yet the material world should not be used for illustration indolently. Some preachers plod in commonplaces by confining themselves, for illustrations, to the most common objects and phenomena of nature, — such as the sun, the moon, the stars, rivers, mountains, forests, storms, clouds. Others limit their range of choice to principles in science; others, to the mechanic arts; a few, to the fine arts; a larger number, to civil government; many, to historical allusions, to mythology, to literary fiction, to military art and history. Henry Ward Beecher makes too exclusive use of his own childhood and his father's family for illustrative purposes. His father had a similar favoritism for military life. A lady once called my attention to the fact, that marriage

and domestic life were favorite sources of illustration in the sermons of the then recent *alumni* of the Andover Seminary. One preacher of my acquaintance found his favorite source of illustrations in the laws and phenomena of disease.

For elegant illustration in the pulpit a preacher should have no favorites. Cultivate a liberal acquaintance with the mechanic arts, the natural sciences, history, biography, the liberal professions, the trades, the fine arts, mythology, fiction, civil and social life. Be at home wherever you can lead the interest of your hearers for new analogies. Then, to varieties of secular knowledge, add command of biblical illustrations.

Again: for variety's sake, illustrations should not be restricted to any one rhetorical form. Do not commonly resort to the boldest of figures, nor always to the mildest. The French pulpit should not be imitated in its excessive use of the apostrophe, nor the Methodist pulpit in the extreme use of exclamation, nor Jeremy Taylor in his too frequent use of vision. The only rule admissible on this subject is the general one, the bolder the figure, the less frequent should be its use. The same principles should give variety to the proportion of rhetorical illustration. Illustration should rarely predominate over declarative or argumentative discussion; yet it should not be limited to pictorial words. Elegance requires diversity in proportion, as in rhetorical form. The extent to which a prolific and inventive mind can execute illustrative variety is seen in the fact, that in sixty-four volumes of the works of Paul Richter, one of the most imaginative of German prose-writers, it is said that only two or three illustrations are repeated.

LECTURE XIX.

VARIETY OF STYLE, CONTINUED.—HARMONY OF STYLE.

RESUMING the consideration of variety of style, let us observe that the variety which an elegant taste requires is assisted by *variety of delivery*. By this is meant, not only that a versatile delivery is the natural expression of a versatile style, but that it is a powerful auxiliary to the forming of such a style.

A very broad theme is this of the reciprocal effect of style and elocution. A monotonous elocution insensibly yet inevitably gives character to the style of one who speaks much in public. A drowsy, drawling, nasal delivery, if such be a preacher's habit, will brood over and suffocate his writing. A brisk, energetic, versatile delivery is an inspiration to the pen. Unconsciously, we form our sentences, choose our collocations of words, adjust the length of our periods, select our rhetorical forms, and even manipulate our vocabulary, as we feel intuitively that we shall utter them in the act of delivery. You will detect before long, if you care to do so, this silent infusion of the genius of your elocution into your written style. You may first observe it in the proportion of long to short sentences; but no feature of style escapes affinity with delivery. Other things being equal, your style will become what your manner is. Each will grow into fitness to the other.

Therefore variety in delivery will promote variety in

style. A flexible voice, various intonation, gesture, and position, will aid the growth of a varied command of oral expression. You write a sermon, for example, addressed to one man in your audience: you know his spiritual condition; you have in mind the locality in which he sits in the church; you have his countenance before you as you write; you preach, not only about him, but to him; you foresee, that, in the application of your discourse, you shall rise to your full height, and lift your voice, or lower it to its most earnest key; and shall endeavor, by look and tone and gesture and attitude, to make him feel that you *mean him.* Do you think it possible that you can have that scene before you in prophetic vision, and with the moral sensibilities appropriate to it alert in your heart, and yet can sit with the dullness of a clam at your study-table, and reel off a style like "Abraham begat Isaac, and Isaac begat Jacob, and Jacob begat Reuben, and Reuben begat Hanoch," and so on? It is inconceivable. Any man's imagination is too vividly clairvoyant to tolerate such incongruity. Horne Tooke even goes so far as to say that no man can write a good style in prose who is not a good conversationalist. Mr. Hazlitt adds, "No style is worth a farthing which will not bear comparison with spirited colloquy."

It is true that instances occur which seem to contradict this view. Rapid speakers sometimes write for the press in a crawling style. This is said to have been true of Mr. Fox, the English statesman. Drawling speakers also sometimes write vivaciously. But such writers do not write *much* for the purpose of oral delivery. They do not write enough to give their delivery a chance to permeate their style. They either speak extemporaneously, and therefore do not write well for

the platform or the pulpit, or they do not speak at all, and therefore do not write well for oral utterance. Elocution and written style do not come in contact frequently enough to create the reciprocal sympathy of which I have spoken.

An amusing account is given by Lord Macaulay, of a criticism by Sheridan upon the style and manner of Mr. Fox and Lord Stormont in the British Parliament. Sheridan had returned one morning from the meeting of Parliament, and a friend asked him for the news of the day. He replied that he had enjoyed a laugh over the speeches of those two men. He said that Lord Stormont began by declaring in a slow, solemn, nasal monotone, that, "when — he — considered — the enormity — and the — unconstitutional — tendency — of the measures — just — proposed, he was — hurried — away in a — torrent — of passion — and a — whirlwind — of im-pet-u-os-i-ty." Mr. Fox he described as rising with a spring to his feet, and beginning, with the rapidity of lightning, thus: "Mr. Speaker such is the *magnitude* such the *importance* such the vital *interest* of the question that I can not but *implore* I can not but *adjure* the House to come to it with the utmost *calmness* the utmost *coolness* the utmost *deliberation*."

This surely does not look much like reciprocal sympathy between manner and style. But scrutinize it carefully, and you will find, even in this rare extreme, that such a sympathy is struggling to unite them. What is the fact with Lord Stormont's case? It is his drawling manner which gives him time to say in what a tempestuous passion he is. He is uttering what he knows to be untrue: a man in a genuine passion does not stop to tell of it. Such a blunder is in perfect keeping with the monotonous, crawling elocution. Note,

also, the florid, figurative style in which he speaks of the torrent and the whirlwind, and the carefulness with which he supplies all necessary connectives. These are both exactly the mistakes which one is likely to make who affects the utterance of passion which has no existence. His style and his professed sentiment are inconsistent, but his style and manner are in conspiracy to betray the falseness of the sentiment.

What is the case rhetorically with Mr. Fox? Precisely the same. He is, in fact, anxious and impatient: his style and manner combine to reveal this, though the sentiment exhorts the House to be just the reverse. Observe his pithy, literal vocabulary. He does not know whether he is in a whirlwind or not. Lord Stormont did know. Note Mr. Fox's compact syntax, indicating his nervous haste by the absence of connectives: "Such is the importance such the magnitude such the vital interest," etc. The style gallops furiously to its goal. Lord Stormont ambled along, sporting with torrents and whirlwinds by the way. Few examples can illustrate a more active affinity between style and manner. Both are more truthfully significant than the sentiment is, of the real state of the writer's mind. Let us not contemn, then, the graces and forces of delivery as mere externals. Some of the subtle influences which give character to discourse have their origin there.

IV. One topic remains to be treated in our discussion of the quality before us. It is the dependence of elegance on the element of *harmony*.

Beauty, strictly speaking, is confined to objects which address the eye. But the sense of the beautiful thus awakened, so far as analysis can detect it, is the same with that awakened by objects which address the ear. So close is the resemblance, at least, that usage recog-

nizes it in the structure of language. We thus extend the term "beauty" to objects of hearing. Beautiful music, a beautiful symphony, a beautiful voice — these combinations excite no sense of incongruity. On the other hand, we extend the term "harmony" and its equivalents to objects of sight. The harmony of a building, of a painting, of a landscape, of a group of statuary, expresses to us a perfectly intelligible idea.

True, such a use of language contains a figurative element; but usage justifies it, and thus recognizes the resemblance, approaching identity, between the pleasurable emotions excited by certain objects through the eye, and those by certain other objects through the ear We pass and repass between the dominions of the eye and the ear, with no sense of conflict or irrelevance. An old writer says of the work of creation, "Nothing has been made without music," and, again, "The whole creation is a poem." The mythological notion of the music of the spheres had its origin, doubtless, by transfer from the beauty of light and motion in the stellar universe. In the criticism of style, therefore, we are in perfect accord with usage in observing the element corresponding to proportion in form, and in defining it by the word "harmony." Among other things the following are worthy of special notice; viz., —

1. The *truthfulness* of a discourse assists in disclosing its beauty to good taste. Truth may not of itself awaken the sense of beauty consciously; yet nothing susceptible of expression in language can be beautiful without it. Good taste, as well as the moral sense, is offended by a falsehood or an exaggeration. What do we mean by the beauty of a truthful narrative, a truthful description, a truthful argument? It is not merely the absence of artifice or of gaudy ornament, it is, in

part, the direct effluence of truth, which we feel. Good taste acknowledges it as a thing of beauty. The refinement of Christian sensibility enters into the question to modify the instincts of taste. The false in sentiment may so shock the sense of truth as to silence all response of our æsthetic nature to the external beauty in which the falsehood may be incarnate. Satan in the guise of an angel of light ceases to be the angel of light as soon as the Satanic nature is disclosed. The popular myths of all Christian ages agree in representing the form of the arch-demon with horns and hoofs, or dragon-shape, whenever his moral nature is revealed. Beauty vanishes at the moment of that revelation. So it is with the works of Satan.

Of two poets, Lord Byron and Cowper, the Christian poet would probably be right, in the decision of a question of disputed taste, if the question involved the distinction between the true and the false. Cowper might be disgusted by that which Byron would enjoy as a matter of taste, and the Christian poet would be correct in his intuitions. Standing on a higher level, he would see through a purer atmosphere. A blasphemous poem, the work of rarest genius, may so shock you that you cease to feel its claims to imaginative beauty. Moral deformity, to the vision of a true soul, may be the one hideous feature in an assemblage of graces which shall make them all odious. In the ultimate analysis of thought, every thing *is* what it is *morally*. On the same principle, the truthfulness of a discourse, while it may not alone awaken the sense of beauty consciously, does heighten that beauty when quickened by other things.

2. By a similar law of affinity, *unity* of sentiment in a discourse assists the impression of beauty as discerned by good taste. Harmony is founded on oneness of aim

in a well-constructed composition. There is a beauty of its own in concinnity of structure. This alone may not create elegance in distinct impression upon æsthetic taste, but it does deepen that impression; and the absence of it may be so keenly resented as to destroy the sense of elegance awakened by other things. The conflict of inconsistent materials, the bungling of disorderly materials, the shuffling of irrelevant materials, the balking of contradictory materials, — all are unfriendly to elegance of speech, because they destroy the sense of harmony. You can not make an elegant discussion out of a slovenly arrangement. The superlative invention of genius in point of thought may be foredoomed to failure by a slipshod plan. Ecstatic impressions of truth on the mind always tend to express themselves in song. Prophetic inspiration was often a poem. Hidden in the recesses of such experiences is the element of harmony, which beauty always presumes, and to which it invites response.

3. Elegance is further promoted by the fitness of a discourse to the time, the place, the circumstances, and the characters concerned in its delivery. I group these things as comprising the most essential of certain things external to the discourse itself, with which it should be in keeping. There is an elegance of propriety which depends chiefly on those relations of a discourse which are here suggested.

Fitness to the *time* when a discourse is delivered is essential to its perfect elegance. A sermon on the Lord's Day, which is unbecoming to holy time, is an offense against the canons of taste no less than against good morals. Remarks in the *house of God* which are irreverent to the associations of the place are, in like manner, violations of good taste. That instinct of

a Christian audience which recoils from boisterous applause in a place of Christian worship is one of the most prompt workings of high culture. That is a coarse audience, moved it may be by a vulgar preacher, which so forgets the proprieties of the place consecrated to the worship of the Most High.

On the same principle, good taste enjoins harmony of discourse with the spirit of an *occasion.* Why would you not sing a comic song at a funeral? Why not play a dirge at a marriage-feast? For similar reasons, æsthetic taste requires the most cautious adaptation of a discourse to the genius of an occasion, like that, for example, of the administration of the Lord's Supper. The æsthetic sense and the moral sense hover vigilantly hand in hand over a very broad range of the proprieties of the pulpit.

The most important of these externals on which the elegance of propriety depends is that of *character.* The character of the speaker and the character of the hearer are the criteria by which many questions concerning the policy of the pulpit must be decided. That may be an elegant propriety in a speaker of great age or of established reputation which would be a flagrant impertinence in a young man unknown to fame. John Hancock, in an oration on the anniversary of the Boston Massacre, delivered a severe invective against the love of riches. It was accepted as authoritative from him, because he was known to have risked, in the defense of his country, the largest fortune in the Colony.

In applicatory appeals to men from the pulpit, preachers have frequent opportunities to obey or to violate these proprieties of character. Aged men, men of unusual intelligence, women of high culture, and men of

official rank, have a right that their personal character, age, and social standing, should be delicately regarded in the style in which they are individualized in the appeals of a preacher. I include "social standing" because in our country, even when social pre-eminence is due chiefly to the possession of wealth, that is commonly a symbol and a proof of something in the man which deserves respect. The junior of such hearers, or their inferior in secular intelligence or in general culture, is not at liberty to address them as in all respects his equals. Why? Simply because he is not their equal; and clerical fidelity is no excuse for impertinence.

Preachers of humble birth, and of spirit less humble, sometimes carry into the pulpit the infirmity of unconscious jealousy of superiors, which was the fruit of their early training. A liberal education should lift a man above all that. The English ideal of a clergyman is in this respect the true one, that a clergyman is, by virtue of his profession, a gentleman. Note, for an example, St. Paul's address to King Agrippa. Bear in memory the spirit of the Old and New Testaments: "Honor the king; bow down before the hoary head; obey magistrates; be subject to principalities." The whole atmosphere of the Bible is that which surrounds a gentleman and a man of taste. It is fitted to create such ministers as George Herbert and Henry Martyn. Because we will not fawn upon great men, nor cringe before men of wealth, it by no means follows that we must not observe in the pulpit, as gracefully as out of it, the proprieties of character which God has ordained in the constitution of society. We practice no sycophantic utterance, we only give expression to a beautiful sentiment in the language of cultured speech, when we respectfully acknowledge

distinctions which God himself honors. In our age and country, he is the bold preacher who will do this thing; not he who blurts out the impertinences which mark his vulgar training, against rank and station and office and wealth and honorable ancestry, knowing that the lower sentiments and the baser passions of a minority of his hearers will greet him with applause.

To illustrate the effect of this error in the pulpit on those who are the object of it, let me tell you a fact from unwritten history. One of the most liberal founders of the Andover Seminary designedly allowed his property to accumulate with years, instead of frittering it away in small donations to small charities, in order that, before he should leave the world, he might do something for the cause of Christ commensurate with its magnitude. He silently plodded his way up to great wealth, cherishing this purpose meanwhile. When at last, in his old age, he was prepared to execute the plan of his early manhood, he remitted the money to the treasurer of the seminary, saying, as he did so, substantially (I quote from memory), "I have been preached at all my days for being a miser. Striplings with rosy cheeks have berated me. But I should like to know what would become of your colleges and seminaries which educate those good young men, if there were not some such misers as I have been." Was it necessary to clerical fidelity to have given just such an impression to linger in an old man's memory? Would not ministerial duty have been more wisely done if the canons of good taste had been observed by an elegant fidelity to the proprieties of character in the appeals of the pulpit under which the servant of God had sat for thirty years?

The strain of remark into which this subject has

enticed me indicates the indefiniteness of that element of harmony on which elegance of discourse depends. It is not always defined in specific language to which one can point the finger. It is diffused, like a delicate color, throughout. Good taste can often do no more than to affirm its own intuitions, and leave them without proof or illustration. Yet good taste in all other minds will confirm them without debate.

4. Yet again: elegance, as dependent on harmony of style, is often assisted by euphonious language. A diction which flows easily, and therefore is pleasing to the ear, is becoming to the expression of beauty in thought. Coleridge even goes so far as to say, that "wherever you find a sentence musically worded, of true rhythm and melody, there is something deep and good in the meaning:" so profound, he thinks, are the sympathies between euphonious words and correspondent ideas. In support of the same criticism is the singular fact, that great orators have commonly a poetic vein in their natures. Cicero, Chatham, Fox, Mansfield, Curran, Webster, Clay, Calhoun, Everett, all wrote poetry. Some orators, of whom Webster is an example, have defined the oratorical genius as in the last analysis synonymous with the poetic genius. so potent is the tendency of eloquent thought to clothe itself in poetic speech. But in this, as in other elements of discourse, it is the demand of the thought which creates the euphonious utterance. The mechanism of style can not put it *on* the thought if the demand is not *in* the thought. The speaker must possess, and be possessed by, what Milton describes as the

> "Thoughts that *voluntary* moved
> Harmonious numbers."

What constitutes euphony of style? I answer, so far as practical criticism determines, it consists of three things. One is smoothness of vocabulary. Languages differ greatly in their susceptibilities in this respect. Those of Northern Europe are inferior to those of the South. The difference is chiefly in the predominance of consonantal over vowel sounds in the national vocabularies. An Italian sentence will contain four vowels where an English sentence of the same length will contain three. In Italian style, vowels form about one-half of the letters used in oral speech: in English style, vowels constitute but three-eighths. Yet any language admits great variety in this proportion, depending not so much on the conscious choice, as on the æsthetic intuitions, of the speaker.

The structure of a speaker's vocal organs affects, in some degree, his instinctive selection of the vowel and the consonant in his style. A perceptible characteristic of the style of some speakers is a predominance of the consonantal sounds, which renders the style harsh and repulsive to the ear. Natives of Southern Europe call ours the "jawbreaking language," because of the frequency of guttural, aspirate, and sibilant sounds. If, in listening to vocal music, you have ever abstracted your attention from the words and ideas, and caught only the sounds, you must have been sensible of the extreme harshness of the concentrated sibilant sounds from a choir of voices. Some speakers have a deformity, which no art can remedy, in their organs of speech, by which the sibilant words and syllables in our language receive excessive utterance when uttered at all. The tongue and the roof of the mouth, with the upper jaw, bear such proportions to each other, that the euphonious medium between extremes in sibilant enunciation is impossible.

No choice is practicable, in such a case, except between the hissing or whistling sound and the lisping of the letter "s." A speaker who labors under this infirmity will be mimicked by his juvenile hearers. Its effect on euphony is irremediable.

Euphony consists, also, in a melodious arrangement of clauses in the structure of sentences. These need to be so arranged that accent and emphasis shall be easily expressed. Emphasis in delivery will be sometimes sacrificed to the instinct of a good ear if the sentiment requires rather euphony than force. The prose-style of Milton furnishes examples in which a good speaker might hesitate between the euphony and the emphasis. A perfect style will so adjust expression to thought as to leave no room for such hesitation.

Euphony consists, also, in a well-proportioned variety of structure in successive sentences. A monotonous repetition of any construction can not be made euphonious, except by singing it. The proverbial sing-song of the pulpit is due largely to the laboring of style after excessive euphony. One source of the weariness caused by uninterrupted declamation is its effect on the ear. The most animated oratorical style becomes soporific if disproportionate.

How may euphony of style be wisely gained? In my judgment, little can be said in answer to this inquiry which is of practical value. The ancients made much of it, however, descending with great care to minute rules for the training of a public speaker in regard to it. To me these seem too artificial for the use of a modern speaker. I never knew or heard of one who practiced them. Modern criticism remands them to that fastidious taste which led Quintilian to instruct and drill his pupils in the art of folding their *togas*, and

dressing their hair. The substance of all the wisdom I have on the subject is comprised in four very simple suggestions.

The chief thing to be relied on for cultivating a euphonious style is attention to the instinct of a good ear. Men differ astonishingly in their natural gifts in this respect. Plutarch says that in his boyhood, while his companions were reading Æsop, he read Cicero, whose sonorous periods delighted his ear long before he understood their sense. Few moderns have excelled Wordsworth in the exquisite delicacy of his sense of sound. Hence the remarkable euphony of almost all his poetry. I do not recall one abrupt line in "The Excursion." Cultivate the accurate and quick ear; then obey its instinctive decisions upon the sound of style, and euphony is a sure result.

Again: in the act of composing, some deliberation and choice are commonly practicable. A speaker is seldom so carried away by the torrent of thought that he does not, in fact, pause and deliberate upon many things in his diction. We are not often inspired in speech. Without detriment to thought, therefore, we can choose intelligently the words which sound most mellifluously to the ear, and flow most smoothly from the tongue. The same choice is practicable of constructions. It is not necessary, because of our enthusiasm in the act of composing, that we should make the rhythm of our style sound like the roll of a lumber-wagon or the beat of a drum. An eminent English author, it is said, can not dot the "i," nor cross the "t," in the orthography of his sentences: he employs an amanuensis to do it for him. But the structure of his style would be improved if he practiced deliberation enough to do it himself. Practice will augment one's power of con

scious choice, without at all impeding the flow of thought.

Further: to gain euphony of style, practice revision of your own style after the act of composing, when the heat of production has had time to cool. Style needs the heat of composing to give it richness and variety of thought: it needs the temperance of criticism to impart to it finish of expression. We do not disdain this labor of review for the sake of other qualities of style, of energy, for example: why not respect it for the sake of elegance as well? If, as we have seen, elegance is essential to a large domain of thought, nothing that promotes elegance is too diminutive to be worthy of an author's care. Beauty is more susceptible of this kind of finish than strength. Elegant composing, therefore, is like the act of painting, in which the artist touches and retouches the canvas till his artistic sense of beauty is content.

Once more: to gain a genuine euphony of style, break up a distinctly metrical construction. The most striking feature in a certain kind of style is its resemblance to blank verse. Some entire pages in the works of Charles Dickens can be scanned as perfectly as a page of hexameters from Virgil. The following passage from "The Curiosity Shop" will serve for illustration; viz., "Then when the dusk of evening had come on, and not a sound disturbed the stillness of the place; when the bright moon poured in her light on tomb and monument, on pillar, wall, and arch, and most of all, it seemed to them, upon her quiet grave; in that calm time when all outward things and inward thoughts teem with assurances of immortality, and worldly hopes and fears are humbled in the dust before them, — then, with tranquil and submissive hearts, they turned away, and left the child with God. When death strikes down the

innocent and young, for every fragile form from which he lets the panting spirit free, a hundred virtues rise in shapes of mercy, charity, and love, to walk the world and bless it."

This does not rise to the dignity of Milton's "Paradise Lost," but it reminds one of Pollok's "Course of Time." It is blank verse, yet is not poetry. The genuine rhythm of prose does not naturally fall into such regularity of meter. No man, it is true, will write thus who has not a musical ear; but, in writing thus, the ear tyrannizes over natural expression. The genuine euphony of prose does not invite one to chant it. It would be hypercriticism to condemn a single sentence of this metrical style; but in the works of Dickens we find whole pages of it, which might easily be set to music. One test of this style, which condemns it for oral address, is that it can not be well delivered. A speaker can only rehearse it in measured recitative. He must rehearse it very well to avoid sing-song. Carlyle gives to young writers the very sensible piece of advice, that "all men who *can* speak their thought should not sing it."

LECTURE XX.

NATURALNESS OF STYLE.

THE philosophical idea of the "fitness of things" is, in some relations of it, an ultimate idea. We can not carry analysis beyond it. For some of our convictions we can give no reason other than this, — that a thing is, or is not, becoming. It does, or does not, fit in to the nature and demands of other things. Style has a quality which expresses this relation of thought as clothed in language. It suggests the interlocking of cog-wheels in machinery.

More specifically, naturalness is that quality by which style expresses the fitness of language to thought, of both thought and language to the speaker, and of thought, language, and speaker to the hearer. In any complete example of it, it is thus complicated. It extends to all the fundamental elements out of which style grows. It stands related to them as proportion does to architecture. We respond to it, not by saying, "That is forcible, this is beautiful, the other is clear;" but we say, "It is becoming, it fits, the cogs interlock: therefore the movement is without jar or needless friction." Such a quality must obviously depend for its recognition entirely upon the intuitions of good taste. Primarily we do not reason about it: we feel it, or we feel the absence of it. Being, as it is, the resultant of qualities of style already discussed, the discussion of it

as distinct from those must necessarily involve some repetition.

I. In what forms, chiefly, does naturalness of style become perceptible to good taste?

1. In answer, be it first observed, that good taste approves naturalness of style in a certain fitness of expression to the *subject* of discourse. Style has a certain temper, like that of steel. It pervades every particle. This may or may not be becoming; and the question whether it is so, or not, depends often on the simple relations of style to subject. Why is not a volatile style suited to a discourse on immortality? Why is a ponderous style unsuited to a comic song? To ask these questions is to answer them. The jests of the French revolutionists under the knife of the guillotine shock us, and the seriousness of a parody pleases us, for the same reason, — the unfitness of things to things. "The Marriage-Ring," the title of one of Jeremy Taylor's sermons, suggests immediately the elegance of style which ought to characterize its treatment. The forty-seventh proposition of Euclid suggests the necessary absence of the qualities of style which "The Marriage-Ring" demands. Do not the opposite subjects "Heaven" and "Hell" compel us, by stress of subject only, to associate with them certain opposites in the style of their discussion? Ruskin contends for the same distinction as fundamental to good painting. He says, "Greatness of style consists first in the habitual choice of *subjects* which involve profound passions. The habitual choice of sacred subjects constitutes a painter, so far forth, one of the highest order."

Let this secret sympathy between style and subject be illustrated by a single quotation from the work of Dr. Chalmers on "Natural Theology." For the purpose

in hand, it is one of the most striking passages in the language. His theme is the difficulty of comprehending the past eternity of the Godhead. He vaults into the expression of his thought in the following style; viz., "One might figure a futurity which never ceases to flow, and which has no termination; but who can climb his ascending way among the obscurities of that infinite which lies behind him? Who can travel, in thought, along the track of generations gone by, till he has overtaken the eternity which lies in that direction? Who can look across the millions of ages which have elapsed, and from an ulterior post of observation look again to another and another succession of centuries, and, at each further extremity in this series of retrospects, stretch backward his regards on an antiquity as remote and indefinite as ever? Could we by any number of successive strides over these mighty intervals at length reach the fountain-head of duration, our spirits might be at rest. But to think of duration as having no fountain-head, to think of time with no beginning, to uplift the imagination along the heights of an antiquity which has positively no summit, to soar these upward steeps till dizzied by the altitude we can keep no longer on the wing; for the mind to make these repeated flights from one pinnacle to another, and, instead of scaling the mysterious elevation, to lie baffled at its foot, or lose itself among the far, the long-withdrawing recesses of that primeval distance which at length merges away into a fathomless unknown, this is an exercise utterly discomfiting to the puny faculties of man. We are called on to soar ourselves up, that we may take hold of God. But the clouds and darkness which are round about him seem to repel the enterprise as hopeless; and man, as if overborne by a sense of littleness, feels as if

nothing can be done but to make prostrate obeisance of all his faculties before him."

Does not this passage suggest vastly more than it expresses of the weight and the magnitude of the thought it carries? Is there not a something here, which, call it what we may, is more than the power of words? The style is not only crowded and weighted by the subject, but is itself uplifted and expanded by the subject. The salient faults of Dr. Chalmers's style become virtues here, because they are sympathetic with the subject. Who objects to the ponderous words, and involved constructions, and prolix sentences? They are just what the theme demands. The style is a picture of the mind struggling and reaching out to grasp the conception of the eternity of God.

2. Naturalness of style becomes perceptible to good taste, also, in a certain fitness of thought and expression to *the relations of hearers to the subject*. A painting attributed to Michael Angelo, in one of the galleries of Italy, represents the Virgin Mary standing erect and calm at the foot of the cross, without a tear or other trace of sorrow on her countenance. Artists defend the painting by the theory that the mother of our Lord was supposed to be divinely instructed in the meaning of the crucifixion and the mystery of atonement, and that inspired exaltation overpowered her maternal sorrow. But critics say, in reply, that this theory of the painter was true only to him. The painting does not explain it to the perplexed spectator. Spectators can not be supposed to originate it. They must look at the artist's work from their position, not from his. A Protestant observer especially, who sees in the Virgin mother only a woman, not superior, perhaps not equal, to some others of her sex, can not be supposed to divine the secret of the painter's theology.

This may serve to illustrate one of the limitations which good taste imposes upon the style of discourse, — that it should be adjusted to the relations of the audience to the subject in hand. It must express truth to their range and quality of conception: otherwise, it is an unnatural style, as much so as if it expressed a falsehood. Indeed, unnaturalness in this form may amount to falseness of impression. Refraction of truth may be equivalent to untruth. When no untruth is uttered, the impression of truth may be a failure, through the preacher's failure to appreciate the prepossessions, or prejudices, or ignorance of his hearers.

For example, denunciation in the pulpit, to which attention has been already directed, fails of its object more frequently than it succeeds. Why? Abstractly considered, denunciation of sin can not be excessive. Even denunciation of a sinner can not exceed his ill-desert. Why, then, does our instinct of hearing often pronounce it excessive? Why do we revolt from it often, as an impertinence? Because it often *is* an impertinence: literally and etymologically it is not pertinent to the relations of hearers to comminatory truth. The consciousness of sin is always forewarned, and therefore fore-armed against such discourse. Style which ignores this fact, and is devoid of tact in approaching the conscience of the hearer, is sure to defeat itself. Through the want of that mental balance which we have considered as essential to energy of utterance on certain subjects, a preacher may fail to understand those delicate adjustments of truth to its recipient's mood or habit which are requisite to natural utterance. The relations of sin to fear, and of both to the appeals of sympathy, he may utterly overlook, and therefore he may utterly fail in his aim.

Hence it is that the most successful preachers have always been the most considerate students of the condition of their audiences. It is a remarkable fact in the history of great religious awakenings, that those who have been the most successful instruments in promoting them have never practiced the policy of reserve in preaching the severe aspects of truth. They have not been silent upon the terrible sanctions of divine law. They have preached those sanctions without compromise or abatement. Those who crave and defend the opposite policy in the pulpit have the whole history of revivals against them. That preaching which has been most successful in the spiritual regeneration of mankind has built up its whole superstructure upon a foundation of stern and uncompromising law. It has practiced no concealment of the wrath of God against sin, and no gloss upon the threatenings of his law against sinners.

Yet the success of such preaching illumines all Christian history. How do we account for this? The reason is, that such preachers have been men of discernment in the study of men, and men of tact in addressing men. Theirs have been the tongue of the learned and the speech of wisdom. They have appreciated the relations of guilt to truth. They have preached law in the spirit and with the ingenuity of love. They have preached truth in divine balance with truth. They have offset appeals to the fears of men by respondent appeals to hope. They have presented a diversified round of truth to the diverse cravings of human nature. Men have said of their preaching, "This meets my wants, this fits my condition, this commands my trust." Such has been the way of all great preachers who have filled history with the story of their success in bringing men to Christ. Preaching, as they did always, with an

object studied and defined in the welfare of the hearer, they had a reason for saying what they said, as they said it, and when they said it. They understood themselves, and understood their hearers. They knew what they were about in the work they did.

This has been the way, also, of all great orators. So Demosthenes spoke. So Napoleon harangued his soldiers within sight of the Pyramids. So Shakspeare makes Mark Antony discourse over the dead body of Cæsar. Common criticism and common sense hit the mark precisely when they say of such men, "These are *natural* orators." Very true; and in this respect every man is a natural orator when he speaks in earnest, and guided by the intuitions of good taste.

3. Further: naturalness of style becomes perceptible to good taste in a certain fitness of discourse to the *relations of the speaker to his subject.* The principle here in view may be best illustrated by a few examples of its violation. It is violated, for instance, by the *dogmatic style.* Not often by glaring and conscious usurpation of authority, but by an indefinite undertone of discourse, a preacher may give to it a magisterial sound. He dictates when he ought only to instruct. He assumes what he ought to prove. Sometimes the evil consists not so much in what is said as in how it is said. A certain gait in the style betrays a swagger or a lordliness of stride which awakens resistance. Dr. Franklin, in criticising one of the appeals of the American Colonies to the king for a redress of grievances, advised a more manly style. Said he, "Firmness carries weight: a *strut* never does." When we detect the "strut" in discourse, we are instinctively aroused to cavil and to criticise. We can not help it. Probably the pulpit is more exposed to this kind of unnatural

discourse than any other medium of public speech. In no other kind of public speech do speakers so largely address their inferiors in age and in intelligence. An educated clergy generally preach to audiences the majority of whom have reason to look up to them as superiors. Such preachers have reason to assume the prerogatives of superiors, but equal reason forbids a dogmatic assumption.

A similar form of unnatural discourse is the *patronizing style*. Not by dogmatic assertion, but by an equally offensive form of self-assertion, a preacher may make the impression, that, in his measurement of things, the truth he utters depends on him, not he on truth. Hints at a preacher's abilities and qualifications to speak on a given theme, apologies for the obscurities of truth, intimations of the preacher's toil in mastering a subject, comparisons with the work of others who have discussed it before him, claims to original discovery, of which there is really very little in any pulpit, — these, and other ways which criticism can not easily define, may give to hearers the impression that the preacher thinks much more of what he brings to his subject than of what he gets from it. Self-consciousness breathes in all that he utters. Is not this the impression which a sermon sometimes obtrudes upon you, when you are not looking for it, and can not point out the paragraph in which the offense occurs? You feel it as a pervasive presence. The truth discussed seems to be treated like the earthquake which one pompous scientist remarked, "had had the honor to be noticed by the Royal Society."

Over against the form of unnaturalness just observed, is another, which may be termed the *apologetic style*. The tone of discourse in this case is apologetic, not for the subject, but for the preacher. By explicit or implied

confessions of incompetence, by deprecations of criticism, by the want of positive opinions, by the intimation of doubts, by a style which marks the want of mastery, a preacher may betray a want of confidence in his own ability, and therefore in his own right, to preach on the subject in hand. In the pulpit, ability and authority are proportioned to each other. Might makes right. If, therefore, standing in the place of an instructor, he shrinks from the prerogatives and responsibilities of an instructor, his style will disclose this. He will not rise to the level of his theme, and handle it as one who knows. A downcast air is given to his discussion which tempts a cold-blooded hearer to ask him by what authority he assumes to preach at all. Style is susceptible of a quality corresponding to the blush of a diffident man.

It deserves note, that audiences are not flattered by this apologetic treatment. They may give to it their pity, but not their respect. They bear with less impatience the dogmatic diction. Men love to be addressed confidently, respectfully indeed, but fearlessly. We would rather be brow-beaten than to be fawned upon. We feel more respect for impudence than we do for imbecility. We respect a pugilist more than a coward.

One other form of this kind of unnatural discourse may be termed the *apathetic style*. The best description which can be given of some preachers is, that they are apathetic as opposed to sympathetic. They manifest no sense of personal subjection to the truths they preach. They seem to feel no sense of the power of truth over their own souls, and therefore no sympathy with hearers under their burden of convictions and quickened sensibilities. Aloof and aloft from the lowland of humble hearers, they preach as if truth concerned hearers only.

They speak it as a being from a superior world might speak.

The verdict of an audience upon such discourse is the most severe retribution that can fall on the head of a living man. They say to the preacher, "You have no heart. Your very fidelity in speech is grounded on your want of sympathy with us in feeling. You *can* be as an angel of judgment to us, because you do not feel as a sinner with us at the bar." Men need a fellow-sinner to preach to them. No other one thing do they crave in this matter as they do the sense of fellow-feeling in him who assumes to speak the message which God sends. They want a brother-man to speak it. They want to see the liquid eye, and feel the tremulous human hand, of him who is one of themselves. Give them these, and you may do what you will with them. Lead them, say, "Come with me," and they follow you at your bidding; but drive them, say, "Go," and you might as well preach to a congregation of corpses.

In opposition to all these forms of discourse a natural style requires a just, temperate, manly appreciation, on a preacher's part, of his own personal relations to the truth he utters. If he has this in living force, it will make itself felt in his preaching. He will not express it by conscious effort and in chosen words: it will express itself. His style will breathe it forth, like the exhalation of a spice-plant.

4. Naturalness of style, again, becomes perceptible to good taste in a certain fitness of expression *to oral discourse*. The oral style of continuous discourse is distinct from that of the press on the one hand, and from that of conversation on the other. Precisely what it is which constitutes the peculiarity of the oral style, criticism can not easily define. But in any striking example

of it we detect several features. One is the predominance of concrete over abstract words in its vocabulary. Oral discourse is essentially pictorial in its nature. It abounds in words which are images, in words which are things. It is opposed to that style which throws the whole burden of speech upon the literal truthfulness of abstract phraseology. It denies the necessity of this in the discussion of any subjects which are proper themes of oral discourse. It is specially hostile to that predilection for abstract phrase which leads a speaker, and more frequently a writer, to fear obvious expression.

An eminent German philosopher is said to have rewritten some pages of his manuscript in the revision of it for the press, because, upon reading them to a company of friends, he found them intelligible at a single hearing. He recast those pages into a more recondite diction, on the ground, that, if his meaning were so obvious as to be understood by a hearer, the class of readers whom he aimed to reach would not deem his work worthy of their notice. Does not this deserve to be ranked with those affectations which I have elsewhere denominated the *cant* of literature? The style of nature in oral speech is very simple in its aims. It repudiates all forms of affectation. It betrays no fear of being understood. It shows no reluctance to being childlike in its love of pictures. The more that a style spoken to the ear can have of the resources which make thought visible to the eye, the more potently does it achieve the objects of oral utterance.

Again: the oral style inclines to a large excess of simplicity over involution in the construction of sentences. We are all sensible of the difference, in this respect, between the style of the press and the style of

speech, when we compare our own styles constructed by the two methods. The very same materials, in the two methods of expression, we throw into totally different constructions. We extemporize in shorter sentences than we use in printed discourse, in more simply framed sentences, with less of inversion and introversion, and suspension of the sense. The difference is so great, that it affects the organs of speech. These are commonly less wearied by extemporaneous speech than by the delivery of a written sermon. Physicians well understand this. For the relief of bronchitis they often advise preachers to abandon their manuscripts in the pulpit.

One other feature in the style natural to oral discourse is the dramatic quality, which makes the hearer active in the discussion of a subject. This partakes of the nature of colloquy in effect, though not colloquy in form. You have doubtless witnessed, perhaps experienced, the power of this feature of style upon an audience. Did you never feel in listening to a speech as if the speaker were questioning you, and you were involuntarily responding? Did you never seem to be yourself the questioner, and he the respondent? Did you never carry on a silent dispute with a preacher through a whole discourse which commanded in you the interest of dissent?

These effects of powerful discourse in genuine oral style may be often witnessed, and sometimes evinced by visible signs. The sailor, who in listening to Whitefield's description of a wreck forgot himself, and in response to the preacher's impassioned cry, "What more can he do?" answered, "For God's sake take to the lifeboat!" illustrated that which we have probably all of us felt, in less degree, when preachers have made us

parties in their discussion, and thrown upon us the responsibility of its application. The illusions of the stage never gave to Garrick and Kean such advantage for moving an audience to the responsive mood as some preachers have found in their mastery of a dramatic diction. In this variety of their success, we pronounce such preachers *natural* orators. It is only, that, in obeying the natural intuitions of an orator, they practice as well the canons of criticism and the laws of good taste in adjusting style to the objects of oral speech.

II. The views we have considered respecting the cognizance of naturalness of style by good taste suggest further the inquiry, By what means may a natural style be most effectually acquired? These may, for the most part, be named with brief remark, because they are not recondite, and they are found chiefly in certain things which lie back of the study of style as such. They are not greatly involved in the *minutiæ* of criticism.

1. You will anticipate me in mentioning as the first of these means of gaining naturalness of style the habit of mastering subjects of discourse. Let the word "habit" be emphasized in this statement. Style depends more upon the permanent *state* of a writer's mind than upon any expedients of discipline, or moods of composition. It has always its foundation in a speaker's character. What the man is, his style will be. Naturalness especially is a fruit and a sign of a certain state of mental discipline and a certain habit of mental action, which will not permit a man to write or speak upon a subject which is not well mastered. We do not walk naturally in utter darkness. Neither do we speak naturally of that of which the chief thing we are thoroughly conscious of is our ignorance, or our bungling knowledge. Mastery is needed to create ease of movement. Style

must have the movement of conquest, not of struggle. Says Ruskin, "Without absolute grasp of the whole subject, there is no good painting." Partial conception is no conception.

2. Another tributary to this quality of style is self-forgetfulness in the act of composing. Unnaturalness in almost any form of it may spring from a want of composure. A speaker may be master of his theme, yet not master of himself, and therefore not at ease about himself. In such a mood he speaks nervously. A constant strain is manifest in his style. He speaks as if he were constantly thinking of his style. Its movement is like that of one walking on tiptoe. The remedy is the habit of self-forgetfulness in composing, whether with pen or tongue. That state and habit of mind which led Isocrates to spend fifteen years in adjusting the sentences of his Panegyric could not fail to drill all nature out of it. One might as well hope to acquire natural vision by twisting and straining for fifteen years to get a sight of one's own eyeballs.

3. A natural style is assisted by an absorbing interest in the aim of a discourse. Note briefly a distinction between interest in the details of a discourse and interest in its aim. An example of one of these will best illustrate both. In a speech delivered in the American Congress by the elder Josiah Quincy, on the repeal of the embargo laid upon our commerce with Great Britain before the war of 1812, we find the following passage; viz., —

"An embargo liberty was never cradled in Massachusetts. Our liberty was not so much a mountain- as a sea-nymph. She was free as air. She could swim, or she could run. The ocean was her cradle. Our fathers met her as she came like a goddess of beauty from the

waves. They caught her as she was sporting on the beach. They courted her as she was spreading her nets upon the rocks." In this strain the orator proceeds. Mark now the quality of this style as related to the professed aim of the whole speech. What was that aim? The ships of the merchants of Boston and Salem and Newburyport and New London and New York were rotting in their harbors. The aim of the legislation advocated by Mr. Quincy was to remove the embargo, and send those ships to sea. Was his mind intent on that in the passage here quoted? Did this passage assist that aim, or could it naturally do so? Not at all. The paragraph is vivacious; its metaphors are novel; its diction is compact and clear; it is a specimen of what passed in those days for fine oratory. But it was quite too fine for the sober and rather rough work which the orator had before him. His interest just then, all the enthusiasm of his mind in the business, was expended on the embellishment of his style. He was thinking of the beauty of it as a work of art. He was speaking to Harvard College and its environs, not to the Southern Congressmen whom it was his business to win over to the commercial interests of New England. If his own fortune had been embarked in one of those rotting ships, and he was intent with his whole soul on saving it by a vote of the Congress, he would have found something to say more to the purpose than courting a sea-nymph on the rocks.

This illustrates the importance to natural discourse of an absorbing interest in the *aim* of it as distinct from the development and embellishment of its details. Keep always the practical object of a discourse in sight; keep it close at hand; let the shadow of it cover the whole structure from beginning to end. This unity of

aim is itself nature. It will often give to a sermon the most essential element of power, when many other elements are wanting. Again we involuntarily disclose the secret of its power when we call it *natural* eloquence.

At this point, as at many others, comes to view one explanation of the fact that ardent piety often gives power to preaching which is not eminent for learning, or depth, or refinement of taste. What is the philosophy of it? In part it is this: piety creates an intense desire to do good by preaching; the desire creates a proportionately intense aim at doing good; and that aim creates strong thought, and puts it into direct and earnest speech. The working of such elements approximates the best results of intellectual force and high culture. By instinct, a mind thus aroused and kept in balance will reject excrescences from its style. It will move right on in masterly progress to its object. Cultivated taste only echoes its decision in pronouncing such a style natural.

4. Still another help to the attainment of the style in question is a strong confidence in the truth proclaimed. No man can preach well who has no faith. None can preach well without a confidence amounting to assurance of success by legitimate means and in legitimate methods. Lose that confidence, and one of two things must follow: either you will work in mental trepidation, and therefore not with mastery of your work or of yourself; or you will seek the show of success by the use of illegitimate resources. The style of the pulpit is sometimes unfitted to success, because a secret distrust fills the preacher's mind of the practicability of success. You can not do a thing which you have no hope of doing. If you do not expect success,

you will not aim at success. You will shoot with an unstrung bow.

On the other hand, the loss of trust in truth will sometimes lead to the use of unnatural means of producing counterfeit results. Hence arise the vagaries of sensationalism in the pulpit. Exaggerated sentiment, coarse illustration, vociferous appeals, violence of description, distortion of biblical metaphors, irrelevant anecdotes, flings at the time-honored faith, parodies of the hymns of the church, irreverent hypotheses of doctrine, — these and a multitude of the same spawn of mingled impiety and imbecility may be brought to the service of a pulpit from which the ancient faith in God and in divine methods of speech has gone out. Mournful is the degradation of that public sentiment which utters its religious responses only to the vulgarity and the irreverence of "salvation armies." Great is the fall of that pulpit which caters to the same tastes by the arts of demagogues and the tricks of mountebanks. Yet the tottering of the pulpit to such a fall may be induced by a gradual decay of faith in its inspired message and its legitimate methods.

There is a calm and earnest trust in God's ordinance that truth shall do its work in the salvation of men, which every preacher needs to make him what the world calls a natural orator. Possessed of such a trust, all preachers may be natural orators. That trust creates a spirit of repose in the use of God's instrument. It makes a preacher feel that he can afford to preach the truth naturally. He need not exaggerate it; he need not distort it; he need not deck it with meretricious ornament; he need not mince it, nor inflate it, nor paint it. He has only to speak it in a spirit of reverence and love, and let it do its work. It will do its work. He

may safely repose in it. In the very heat and turmoil of the world's hostility to his message, he may wrap himself in the spirit of a child's faith. That shall be to him and to his life's work like the mantle of a prophet. He may *know* in his inmost soul that his words are the wisdom of God and the power of God.

In such a *state* of faith a preacher will preach in a natural style, with no conscious effort to do it. He will speak with simplicity, because it is not natural to his tastes to do otherwise. He will preach with a daring neglect, even contempt, of illegitimate means of stimulating the interest of hearers, which may astonish observers who do not know where is the hiding of his power. It is told of the first Napoleon, that, in his most hard fought battles, he used to be restless, anxious, irritable, and taciturn, until a certain turn was reached in the execution of his maneuvers; but that after that crisis was gained, — a crisis invisible to all eyes but his, — and long before victory seemed assured to his staff-officers, he suddenly became calm, bland in his manners, apparently careless in his orders, even jovial in his conversation, and that, at the battle of Eylau, he lay down to sleep on a hillock which the enemy's grape-shot grazed without awakening him. In explanation of his seeming temerity, he said that he fought a battle as he had planned it from the beginning, and that after a certain stage was arrived at in the evolution of his plan, if all went well thus far, he knew that victory was sure, his work was done: that which remained was like the closing steps in the solution of a mathematical problem, which no power could change.

Similar, yet superior to the repose of genius in its own destiny, is that rest in the power of divine truth which a preacher may feel, and which, if he does feel it, will

go far towards realizing in his style of discourse the naturalness of a perfect taste.

5. One additional means of acquiring a natural style remains to be noticed: it is practice in composition. Did you ever observe that a young man's chirography, originally stiff, awkward, angular, bearing every mark of juvenility, becomes often, in the process of time, flowing and business-like, through mere practice in rapid writing? Though it may not gain the kind of finish which belongs to the engraving of the copy-book, yet you pronounce it superior to that, because it is a *natural* hand. It expresses somewhat of the individuality of the writer.

Similar to this is the indefinable elegance which style may receive from large practice in composing. In the history of the fine arts, the most illustrious painters are those who have painted most abundantly. Ruskin says, "Of two touches as nearly as possible alike in other respects, the quickest will invariably be the best." Of perfect execution, velocity is an invariable quality. This is, in part, the explanation of the fact that large practice in composing tends to create a perfect style: it is because much composing necessarily involves rapid composing. It does not follow that the most voluminous writers will necessarily be the most perfect writers. But it does follow that practice in this, as in other arts, will re-act upon natural genius, and develop it in natural work.

Other things being equal, the most prolific writer will be the most natural writer. The man who writes the largest quantity with critical care will write most naturally. In many instances in which other requisites to a natural style exist, writers fail in this quality for no reason other than that they have not written enough to

write naturally. They have not become acquainted with nature. I have known men to be confirmed in a juvenile style, because they would not write abundantly. Composing was a drudgery, and they allowed it to remain such by avoiding it when it was not compulsory. Nothing could be more suicidal in the self-discipline of a young preacher. A preacher is by profession a writer. He *must* write much. His mind must be trained to the habit of composing. He must bring himself into a constant state of mental productiveness. He needs to acquire such command of himself and his resources, that composition shall be a necessity to him as an expression of the contents of a full mind.

Izaak Walton wrote for the love of writing. Charles Lamb wrote all his works for recreation in the intervals of leisure from his clerkly toil in the East India House. Probably not a page that he ever wrote was a drudgery to him. Walter Scott, till his brain gave way, composed always in a glee of enthusiasm. His daily contributions to the press he *captured* with the ardor of a sportsman. He often hesitated between the two, — whether to sit down at his desk, or to go out among the hills with his dog and gun; for he enjoyed both his pen and his gun with equal zest. He gained this pleasurable ease in composition by long and constant practice. He used to involve himself in literary engagements purposely, that they might crowd him. He said that he "never wrote so well, or felt so well, as when the press was thundering at his heels with the demand for more copy."

The same phenomenon is seen in the history of Shakspeare's authorship. Scarcely any other feature in his professional life is so marvelous as the amount of his work and its rapidity. His working life was

compressed into about twenty-three years. During that time he gave to the English stage an average of two dramas a year. This, for such productions as his, and continued through a series of years, was a miracle of intellectual fertility. From the age of thirty years to that of fifty-three, Shakspeare's mind must have lived in that state of habitual production which is so necessary to one in the clerical profession.

This prolific state, so far from degrading the quality of production, elevates and enriches it. As the force of a cannon-ball is augmented by its velocity, so the mental power of composition is reduplicated by rapidity of creation, if regulated by good taste. This mental condition, in which composition becomes a delight, a necessity, a demand of nature upon a full mind, is the habit which a preacher, above all other professional men, needs to acquire in order to have uniform command of natural discourse. You can not acquire it but by large practice. Thinking will never give it to you. Study of rhetorical treatises will never create it. General reading will never do it. Criticism of the works of others or of your own is powerless of itself to meet the necessity. You must write and speak, speak and write, till pen and tongue move spontaneously and joyously.

APPENDIX.

CATALOGUE OF WORDS AND PHRASES.

As a sequel to the foregoing Lectures, I proceed now to some critical remarks upon WORDS AND PHRASES which are chiefly violations, either of English purity or of precision, or are of doubtful authority in the usage of good writers. Many of these are of special significance to the style of the pulpit: others are of more general importance. In this compilation I have made free use of the standard works on English synonyms and on Americanisms. A special acknowledgment is due of my obligations to Pickering's "Vocabulary," Bartlett's "Dictionary of Americanisms," and a manuscript Catalogue, resembling this, prepared many years ago by Professor Park of Andover. Such a list of words must necessarily be of temporary authority. The language is constantly undergoing changes. Old words are becoming obsolete: new words are coming into use. The obsolete, in some cases, are returning into scholarly use. In the same manner, old significations of words retire, and return again, and new significations are adopted, perhaps to undergo the same mutations. A national mind is one of the most stable, yet one of the most mobile, of created things. The literature and language which embody the recorded thought of a nation are of the same character. The act of creating, changing, improving, and extending such a catalogue as the following, is one of the most instructive studies of the mother-tongue, and one of the most effective expedients for keeping one's style of composition in scholarly conformity to good

usage. Every man whose profession in life is that of authorship or of public speaking needs the disciplinary influence of constructing such a catalogue for himself. The following is offered as a foundation, subject to correction and expansion with the lapse of time and the growth of the language.

A.

ABILITY and CAPACITY are not exact synonyms. The one expresses active power; the other, receptive power. But the plural "abilities" includes both ideas.

ADHERENCE and ADHESION were once interchangeable. Now the one is restricted to things mental and spiritual; the other, to things material. We speak properly of adherence to a principle, and of the adhesion of iron.

ADMIRE is improperly used in the sense of "desire;" as in the expression "I should admire to go." In the seventeenth century it was used to express wonder alone. Jeremy Taylor wrote, "In man there is nothing admirable but his ignorance and his weakness;" that is, nothing surprising. Modern usage has added, in its use of the word, to the idea of wonder, that of approval.

ALONE is improperly used in the sense of "only;" as in the phrase "the alone God." This word was originally written "all-one." Thus applied to the Deity, it was very expressive, and was parallel to other compounds significant of the attributes of God; as, "almighty, all-seeing," etc. Later usage, it is to be regretted, has abandoned the ancient form, and so lost from the word the ancient idea of unity. "Alone" and "only" are not synonyms.

ALTERNATIVE is often used, in improper construction, in the phrase "which of two alternatives." In strict definition, an alternative is a choice between two things. We say, "This was the alternative," and then specify two things between which the choice must be made. Two alternatives imply four objects of selection. Dr. Chalmers employs the word correctly when he says, "My purpose might have been expressed in the following short alternative: that, if I got my arrangements in the parish of St. John's, I would not take the professorship; but, if I did not get them, I would think of it." Here are two hypotheses making one alternative.

AMONG and BETWEEN are not interchangeable. "Between"

is the right word when only two are concerned; "among," when more than two.

ANCIENT and ANTIQUATED are not synonyms. An antiquated thing is ancient: an ancient thing may not be antiquated. An ancient institution may, for that reason, be the more worthy of respect: an antiquated institution has outlived respect.

ANON is now obsolescent. In the phrase "ever and anon" we sometimes hear it, but even there the word is retiring behind the cover of poetic license.

APPARENT is in some connections improperly used as the synonym of "obvious." To say that an occurrence is apparent does not necessarily mean that it is real, but may mean the reverse. We speak of an apparent contradiction, which we do not admit to be a real one. The phrase "heir-apparent" suggests the contingency that the heir may not come to the throne.

APPREHEND and COMPREHEND are improperly interchanged. To apprehend a truth is to perceive it, to have some intelligible notion of it: to comprehend a truth is to understand it in all its compass. These are important words to the pulpit. We may represent the mysteries of religion as apprehensible by the human mind, but not as comprehensible. To apprehend them is sufficient ground for faith: to comprehend them would be an act of reason.

APPREHENSIVE is improperly employed in the sense of "understanding." "Apprehend" and "understand" are synonyms: "apprehensive" and "understanding" are not. The element of fear enters into the meaning of "apprehensive." We say, "I am apprehensive that it is too late." It is rarely used now in its etymological sense except as a technicality in philosophy.

As is improperly used for "that." "I do not know as I shall go" was once good English: now "as" thus employed is a vulgarism.

ATONEMENT in the sense of "reconciliation" is not pure English. Of words which can be misused, this is the most important one in the vocabulary of the pulpit. Its history deserves study. The old English meaning of it was doubtless its etymological meaning, "at-one-ment." This must be conceded in the discussion of the doctrine which it now expresses. Shakspeare, for instance, says, "He and Aufidius can no more *atone* than violentest contrarieties." Fuller speaks of Moses as "*atoning* two Israelites who were at variance." Sir Thomas More speaks of two parties as

"having no more regard to their old variance than to their new *atonement*." Beyond question, the idea of the word in all these cases was "reconciliation."

It must be conceded also, I think, that, so far as the notion of "satisfaction" for sin is at present in the word, it has been put there by theological science, and is of right there only as a technicality of theological science. But that the idea of "sacrifice" for sin is now the central one in "atonement" is no longer an open question. Modern usage has fixed this interpretation beyond recall. It is but a *ruse* in theological controversy to assail the modern doctrine of atonement under cover of the old English use of the word. That use of it has entirely disappeared.

AVERSE FROM *vs.* AVERSE TO. — Which is right? Usage is divided. Some cling to the first phrase on etymological grounds. Others contend that the second phrase has vanquished etymology, and is authorized by usage. Noah Webster and Dr. Todd, the editor of Johnson's Dictionary, contend for "averse to:" Dr. Witherspoon and Sir James Mackintosh prefer "averse from." In the present balance of authorities, either form is allowable; but it can hardly be doubted that the etymological form will be displaced, and "averse to" will hold ascendency in the language. It is a curious phenomenon, that, when an etymological form has begun to yield its place, it rarely becomes firmly fixed again. The drift of usage is to its exclusion. It is like a loosened tooth.

AWFUL in the sense of "disagreeable" is an impropriety. It is a provincialism of New England. Lambert, in his "American Travels," says, "The country-people of New England speak of every thing that creates surprise as being awful: they say an "awful wind," "an awful hole," "an awful mouth." Robert Hall, by a singular lapse from his usually pure dialect, employs the word in the same sense. Two travelers at Rome once criticised Michael Angelo's statue of Moses. "Is it not awful?" said one. "Yes," answered the other: "it is sublime." — "No, no!" rejoined the other: "I meant awfully ugly." The second speaker used the word in its legitimate sense of "inspiring awe." Dr. Barrow speaks of God as an "awful Being." Dr. Watts describes the joys of heaven as involving "awful mirth." This is another sense of the word, that of being "filled with awe," once in good use, but now obsolete.

B.

BASE used in the sense of "found:" "He base*d* his argument on testimony." This use, till a very recent period, was condemned by critics; but it has made its way into the language. Dr. Whately employs it, and he rarely uses a word not good English.

BELITTLE. — We need this word: we have no exact equivalent. Some dictionaries admit it. But at present it is not supported by the best usage. Mr. Bartlett, the author of the most valuable work we have on Americanisms, says that Thomas Jefferson is the only author of distinction who has employed it. He is not sufficient literary authority for the creation of a word. This word is one of a large class of compounds of the word "be" which tempt a loose writer. The fact deserves notice, that more than a hundred of these compounds found in one of our standard dictionaries are not good English.

BESIDE and BESIDES are not synonyms, yet are very frequently so used by writers. "Beside" means "by the side of:" "besides" means "in addition to."

BETRAYAL *vs.* BETRAYMENT. — Which? Dr. Whately uses the first; Thomas Jefferson, the second. Both are condemned by some critics. But we surely must have one of them. "Betrayal" is the more frequently used, but "betrayment" has the more regular English construction. At present either is allowable, but usage inclines to the first.

C.

CALCULATE for THINK is a provincialism of New England. Its proper meaning is to "reckon." By a singular coincidence, this latter word is also used as a provincialism at the West and at the South for the idea for which "calculate" is employed in New England.

CAN BUT *vs.* CAN NOT BUT. — Which? Shall we say, "I can not but think," or "I can but think"? The best usage prefers the former.

CHASTITY and CHASTENESS are not synonyms. Dean Swift is eminent for chasteness of style, but not for chastity of thought. As applied to authorship, "chasteness" means rhetorical purity. "Chastity" means moral purity. A pure woman has chastity; a

pure style has chasteness; and both are chaste. Yet De Quincey improperly speaks of "chastity of style."

CHRISTEN for BAPTIZE can not be condemned as bad English so long as the English Church retains it. But it does not at all express the true idea of baptism. In perfect English, "to christen" is to Christianize. A heathen nation is christened when converted to Christianity. An old writer says, "The most part of England was christened in the reign of King Ethelred." From this use, the word was transferred to the rite of baptism; that, in the sense of baptismal regeneration, being synonymous and the doctrine of the Book of Common Prayer. In Shakspeare's drama "Henry the Eighth," the king is informed of the birth of his daughter Elizabeth, and asks Cranmer to baptize her, saying, "I long to have this young one made a Christian."

CHRISTIANIZATION. — We have no such word in classic use, though the dictionaries contain it. The participle "Christianizing" is employed in a substantive sense. Good taste avoids, if possible, words of six syllables. Saxon idiom chooses brevity.

CHRISTLESS is to be found in dictionaries, but not in the best authors. It is a barbarism of the pulpit.

COEVAL and CONTEMPORANEOUS involve a nice distinction, for which etymology furnishes no reason, but which usage authorizes. "Coeval" is applied to institutions; "contemporaneous," to individuals. Authors are contemporaneous, not coeval.

COMMUNITY should not be used without the article, to express the idea of "population." The article is often omitted when the word expresses the abstract idea, as in the phrase "community of goods." But to indicate the people of a city we should say "the community."

CONCEPT and CONCEPTION have a history. "Concept" was once good English as the synonym of "conception." Then it fell into disuse, and now is revived again by Sir William Hamilton and others, but not as the synonym of "conception," but to signify the idea conceived. But in any sense "concept" must be as yet regarded as a technicality of psychological science.

CONDITIONED, in the sense of "dependent upon." — American dictionaries recognize this: but I venture the opinion, that, in the best usage, the word is still restricted to its old meaning; that is, "stipulated."

CONDUCT is often improperly used without the reflexive pro-

noun; as in the phrase "he conducts well." It should be "he conducts himself well."

CONFORM WITH *vs.* CONFORM TO. — Which? In my judgment this is one of the cases in which etymology has given way to usage. The Westminster Catechism obeys the usage of its own day and of ours in saying, "Sin is any want of conformity *unto* the law of God."

CONTINUAL and CONTINUOUS are not exact synonyms. "Continual," commonly, not always, means "with constant recurrence." "Continuous" is the stronger word, and means, "without intermission." We should be correct in saying, "Continual interruptions prevent continuous study."

COMPOUND WORDS. — I add this phrase here in order to give some further criticisms upon the use of them. The following memoranda deserve notice: —

1. The presumption is always against the purity of compounds of great length. The license, in this respect, in which the German mind luxuriates, the English language does not tolerate. The Saxon taste, which inclines always to brevity, keeps multitudes of words of this structure at bay. Individual authors coin them, but the national mind rejects them.

2. The study of the German language and literature should be conducted with precaution against the use of compounds. German taste manufactures them without restriction. The German language admits them without violence to its structure and its history. Not so the English language. Yet our language suffers from the use of German importations by students of German literature who are not classic in their rhetorical tastes.

3. Therefore, whenever a compound word betrays a foreign origin, it should be regarded with suspicion. Some such words have doubtless become good English, but multitudes of other such have not.

4. Compounds which from their signification are likely to be of clannish or technical origin should be suspected. Multitudes of such words, of a religious character, are not used at all outside of the pulpit. Such words should be presumed to be barbarisms till their right to a place in the language is proved by investigation.

5. Compounds which by reason of their construction are odd, or difficult of enunciation, are presumptively not good English. Dr. Orville Dewey coins the word "rich-man-ness" to express pride of

purse. The oddity of the word should be enough to condemn it. Scholarly taste never can have coined such a word. A member of the American Congress once said that he was not a good speaker, and that he was obliged to hold on to his desk and steady himself, if he attempted to use the word "eleemosynary." Many of the compound words which are lying around loose upon the outskirts of our language, if tried by the same test, would fail of admission.

6. Compounds which evidently descend to low or comic style are presumptively not pure English. A writer in our current literature coins the word "go-ahead-a-tive-ness." One need not pause to investigate usage to know that such an abortion as this has no place in classic English. An interesting phase in the history of such compounds is witnessed in the history of the Greek literature. In its earliest periods, when the language was in its infancy, as in Homer and Hesiod, compound words abounded. When the language reached its maturity, in the works of the later poets and philosophers, but few such words were used, or recognized by classic authority. They are not favorites with Plato. At that period the large majority of long compounds are found in the comic writers alone. Aristophanes abounds with them. He is reported to have once coined a word of seventy-seven syllables. They were used as an expedient for expressing low or ludicrous ideas.

A striking similarity to this is seen in the use of such words in our own language. They multiply in number as we descend from serious and dignified productions to the comic and the vulgar. Their spawn is in the swampy low grounds of our literature. Therefore they are specially incongruous with the style of sermons.

7. Yet it must be admitted, that, in our language, compounds of two syllables are very numerous. It is an old Saxon usage to coin new words by linking two old ones. Such compounds as "dog-star," "day-labor," "state-rights," are perfectly good, and scores like them. Why some, and not others, are admitted by the national taste, it is often impossible to say. A cultivated taste and a delicate ear must gradually form one's style till extensive reading has given to it a classic character. Years of unbridled license in the use of compounds can only corrupt one's style hopelessly.

To illustrate the danger to which young preachers are exposed in this respect, let me rehearse to you a list of such compounds which I once transcribed from a dozen manuscript sermons They

were the following; viz., "Bible-readers, Scripture-motives, Bible-truths, snail-like, soul-absorbing, soul-numbing, soul-destroying, all-surpassing, brimstone-sins, peace-speaking, soul-filling, awe-inspiring, woe-engendering, sevenfold-heated, hell-counsels, never-to-be-reconciled, stand-point, world-worship, world-worshipers, night-revelers, cross-bearing, sin-polluted, self-growth, base-principles, heaven-high, temple-builders, heaven-born, short-comings, gospel-assurance, well-wishing, gaslight-views, self-same, heavenly-mindedness, winter-weary, self-surrender, sin-sick, cloud-muffled, white-lipped, warmth-giving, zest-giving, heart-belief, soul-calmer, half-way-measures, God-fearing, God-loving, God-defying, what-not, rain-or-shine, subject-matter, serpent-like, gospel-artillery, all-embracing, Bible-doctrines, quasi-poetical, heart-obedience, gospel-statement, God-given, say-so, sin-disordered, gospel-influence, gospel-truth, gospel-sinners, gospel-motives, gospel-hopes, gospel-ideas, and gospel-argument."

I admit that some of these are good English. I have purposely given the good and the bad together in order to present an exact picture of the facts in the structure of a handful of sermons written by men nearly all of whom were graduates of colleges. At the least, four-fifths of these compounds have no other authority than that of the pulpit. Many of them were the momentary coinage of the individuals who wrote them in the heat of composition. Is not the good taste of scholars repelled by them? More than this, is not the taste of gentlemen and of refined women offended by them? Coleridge commends the diction of a certain class of poets, because they avoided "every word which a gentleman would not use in dignified conversation." Tried by this test, how many of these compounds of the pulpit could hold their place? Although no preacher has ever used them all, yet, if twelve men may coin them all, one man may adopt them all. But what a monstrosity of taste such a style would be! The large majority of such words should be excluded, for the sufficient reason that we do not need them for any purposes of scholarly and manly discourse. Therefore it is neither scholarly nor manly to manufacture them. The very soul of a scholarly style is put out if such barbarisms are put in.

D.

DECIDED *vs.* DECISIVE. — These are not synonyms. A decided fact is one which is beyond dispute: a decisive fact is one which puts an end to dispute. I may have a decided opinion, but it may not be decisive of a controversy. A decided victory may not be decisive of a campaign.

DECLENSION is improperly used to signify the act of declining. It is a good word to express a state of decline, or the process of decline. But we can not say, "He sent in his declension of the office." Webster's Dictionary admits the word in this sense, but I do not find it in the works of the first class of English authors. We need a word to express the act in question: we have none but the participle "declining." Somebody was in distress for the right word who reported that a certain officer had sent in his "decliniency." "Declinature" may yet make its way into reputable use.

DEED used as a verb is a technicality of law, not good English elsewhere.

DEITY should not be used without the article except to express the abstract quality of divinity. It is not the proper synonym of "God." Even with the article, it deserves to be noted that the word is in the pulpit a chilling and repellent synonym of "God." One clergyman of my acquaintance was dismissed from his pastoral charge; and one of the objections of his people to his ministrations was, that he called the divine Person "Deity." The objection meant more than it expressed. It meant that his whole style was indirect, impersonal, abstract, cold. The common people never speak of, probably never think of, God impersonally. The pulpit should not be *less* intense than the popular thought is in its conception of the Godhead.

DELICIOUS *vs.* DELIGHTFUL. — The first should always be restricted to pleasures of sense. We should not speak of a delicious joy, or peace, or communion. Even the phrase "delicious music" implies the predominance of the sensuous element in the pleasures of song. This is one of a class of words by which the pulpit often degrades spiritual ideas. We have inherited from a former age a propensity to express religious thought by an excess of sensuous imagery, which approaches the voluptuous. Oriental tastes demanded this: Occidental tastes are repelled by it. John Foster

condemns the usage of the English pulpit in reducing so much of religious experience to the level of the sense of taste. He says that it makes religion seem "as if it were cooked." Sometimes it is not even that: it is presented raw.

DELUSION *vs.* ILLUSION. — These are not exact synonyms, though the dictionaries interchange them. Coleridge writes, "That illusion, contradistinguished from delusion." Dr. Whately indicates the distinction tersely by recalling the etymology of the two words: *illudo*, "to make sport of;" *deludo*, "to lead astray." Illusion exists in the imagination only: delusion affects conduct in real life. The one is a mental error in a passive state; the other, a mental error in active working. The same error may be first an illusion, and then a delusion.

DEPRAVITY and DEPRAVATION are not interchangeable. Depravity expresses the state or the quality; depravation, the act or the process.

DEPUTIZE is one of the numerous coinages of verbs by the Greek termination *ize*. The right word is "depute."

DERANGED *vs.* INSANE. — These are not equivalents, unless the word "deranged" is qualified by the word "mentally" or its synonym.

DESK for PULPIT, in the phrase "sacred desk." — This is an Americanism, for which the only reputable authority I have met with is John Quincy Adams.

DICTION and STYLE are not exact synonyms. Style refers to thought and language; diction, to language only. Yet, where exact definition is not necessary, these words may be interchanged.

DIFFER WITH *vs.* DIFFER FROM. — Which? Dr. Worcester and the last editors of Webster's Dictionary defend the first of these forms as being in good use in England, and gaining ground in this country. They give Lord Brougham and Mr. Canning as authorities. These are hardly conclusive authorities. In this country, my observation has detected the phrase chiefly in the style of newspapers. If we admit it, we must admit the phrase "differ from" also; for of that there can be no doubt. "Differ with" I prefer to note as doubtful.

DISBELIEF and UNBELIEF involve a distinction of great moment to the pulpit. "Unbelief" expresses less than "disbelief." It may arise from ignorance or the want of evidence. "Disbelief" is more positive: it implies that evidence has been considered and rejected.

The folly of an atheist consists in the fact that he affirms the negative of that of which no human mind can know a negative. Yet the distinction is of comparatively recent origin. When our English Bible was translated, the distinction was not clearly recognized in the language. Our Lord, therefore, is represented as denouncing the sin of unbelief, when the thing he did denounce was the more positive sin of rejecting evidence.

DISREMEMBER. — We have no such word in the language. I have never heard it but in the city of Philadelphia.

DONATE is one of the counterfeit coins of verbs from substantives never used by writers of critical taste. The substantives "donation" and "donative" are good words.

DON'T. — The contraction is noticeable as being often used colloquially, and sometimes in the pulpit, for "doesn't." To say, even conversationally, "he don't," is not grammatical, unless the subjunctive mood is employed.

DOXOLOGIZE. — It is astonishing that so scholarly a critic as Dr. Worcester should have admitted this word into his dictionary on the obsolete authority of the early editions of an English dictionary from which it was afterwards excluded.

DROUTH for DROUGHT. — A relic of Anglo-Saxon orthography. Used by Lord Bacon, now a vulgarism.

E.

EFFECTUATE. — We have no such word in classic use, though dictionaries contain it.

ENDOW and ENDUE have a nice distinction in good English use. "Endow" may be employed in reference to any qualities, mental, moral, or physical; "endue," to mental and moral qualities only. Solomon was endowed with wealth, and endued with wisdom.

ENERGIZE is improperly used to signify exerting energy: its true meaning is to impart energy.

ENGLAND for BRITAIN. — The error here is not that of calling the three countries by the name of one: that is politically correct, and sustained by usage. The error is the anachronism of designating the three kingdoms by the single name of England before their union. The most scholarly usage would not authorize us to say that "Cæsar invaded England:" he invaded Britain. So Gaul was conquered by the Romans, not France.

ENTHUSIASM *vs.* FANATICISM. — The distinction between these words is of recent origin, but is of great moment to religious experience. Formerly both words were employed to signify defects, both being morbid excitements, differing only in degree. Isaac Taylor, in his volumes on these manifestations of religious fervor, treats the one as a morbid state, the other as a morbid state attended with malign emotions. Recent usage has rescued the word "enthusiasm" from association with mental disease, and authorizes now its use to signify a healthy and normal excitement. Says a living author, "The Puritans were enthusiasts for religious liberty, not fanatics." Fifty years ago that distinction was unknown.

EPOCH and ERA should be distinguished. In loose usage they are interchanged, and the principles on which our dictionaries are compiled lead them to recognize this. Yet the distinction is valuable, and the language is improved in precision by retaining it. An era is a succession of time: an epoch is a point of time. An era commonly begins at an epoch. We live in the Christian era, in the Protestant era, in the era of liberty and letters. The date of the birth of Christ was an epoch: the period of the dawn of the Reformation was an epoch.

EQUALLY AS WELL is a phrase which I have often detected in manuscript sermons, and heard in the pulpit. It is redundant. "Equally well" or "as well" is pure English. But "equally as well" is barbarous; and "equally as well as," which is not unknown in the dialect of the pulpit, belongs to the pre-adamic age.

ETERNAL and EVERLASTING are critical words to the pulpit. Modern usage has developed a distinction which did not formerly exist. "Everlasting" means now "without end;" "eternal," without beginning or end. Once they were interchangeable. Now we should not designate the past eternity of God by the word "everlasting" except in biblical quotations, as in the phrase "from everlasting to everlasting." On the same principle of conformity to usage, we drop the word "eternal," and substitute "everlasting," in defining the doctrine of future punishment.

EVANGELIZATION is one of the long-winded words which more classic use has curtailed to the participial noun "evangelizing."

EVENTUATE is a barbarism, like "effectuate," the origin of which is unknown.

EXCEPT and UNLESS are confounded by heedless writers. "You can not have it except you earn it" should be, "unless you earn

it." The one is a preposition; the other, a conjunction. The improper use of "except" is a Southern provincialism.

EXHUMATE. — Somebody has coined this verb from the good English noun "exhumation." The true verb is "exhume."

EXPECT for THINK is a vulgarism, probably suggested by the similar use of the word "suspect" as the synonym of "think." Both are provincial vulgarisms of New England.

EXTREME should not be used as if it were the positive form of the adjective: it is the superlative. Good usage, therefore, does not authorize the phrases "more extreme," "most extreme."

F.

FALL for AUTUMN is not objectionable colloquially; but, in public discourse, "autumn" is in better taste. It is to be regretted that we have not retained uniformity of Anglo-Saxon titles for the four seasons. We need the word "harvest" in place of autumn, the old Saxon "hearfest." In the rural districts of England one often hears the seasons indicated by the titles spring, summer, harvest, winter.

FALSEHOOD for FALSENESS. — The thing for the quality of the thing is not precise. The lie is the falsehood: the untruthfulness of it is the falseness.

FEEL for DESIRE is a gross impropriety often heard in the pulpit in the dialect of prayer. "We feel to thank Thee." The origin of it I do not know, but it is too frequently heard to escape censure.

FELLOWSHIP is improperly used as a verb. This use of it is generally condemned as an Americanism. But it was thus used by Sir Thomas Mallory, in the "History of King Arthur," and published by the celebrated printer Caxton, in 1485. This error is therefore of English origin; but it has fallen out of good use there, and is probably one of the words retained in this country by the early emigrants from Great Britain. Many words and significations of this class are now supposed to be Americanisms which are really old English, now obsolete in the mother-country, but not so here.

FIRSTLY for FIRST. — "Secondly," "thirdly," etc., are correct; but "first" is itself an adverbial form. Charles Dickens generally uses "firstly." De Quincey also employs it. Preachers are obviously much exposed to the error.

Fix, in the sense of "to put in order," is incorrect. It is an Americanism which has no authority in scholarly usage. The proper meaning of the word is "to make firm."

Fixity for Fixedness is a barbarism. It is probably imported from the French *fixité*. To illustrate the distress for a barbaric style which literary men sometimes manifest, the error of Robert Boyle, the Irish philosopher, deserves notice, in coining the word "fixidity."

G.

Genius *vs.* Talents. — What is the distinction? Criticism is uniform in admitting a distinction, not so in defining it. The words should be noted as by no means interchangeable. See the word "genius" in Webster's Unabridged Dictionary.

Get is often employed tautologically, as in the expression "I have got it," when the meaning is only that I have it in possession. The prejudice against this word and its inflection "got," which prevails among half-educated people, is an affectation. Such is especially the preference for "gotten" instead of "got." The word, with its grammatical inflections, is perfectly good, even classic English, and is one of the most valuable words in the language. In addition to its variety of regular significations, what should we do without it in its more various idiomatic uses; such as, "get at," "get ahead," "get clear," "get on," "get up," "get rid of," "get along," "get out," "get through," "get to," and others? The danger of scholasticism is on the side of fastidiousness respecting such forms.

Gift is improperly used as a verb. I have sometimes, not often, heard it. We have the participial form "gifted," and probably the verbal use of "gift" has been coined from that.

Gospel. — Improperly employed as an adjective in a host of compounds for which the pulpit alone is responsible; such as, "gospel-light," "gospel-privileges," "gospel-truth," "gospel-preaching," "gospel-sinners," etc. Not one of these is in classic use. They constitute a blotch upon the style of the pulpit, which is exceedingly disgusting to scholarly hearers. Even illiterate hearers have a dim instinct which disapproves them.

H.

HABIT, CUSTOM, USAGE, are improperly confounded. Yet I am not positive as to their true distinctions. I suggest the following for further observation; viz., that "habit" is commonly, in strict use, limited to the individual; that "custom" implies the consent of numbers; and that "usage" is a long-established custom. Thus Shakspeare says, "How use doth breed a habit in a *man!*" And Hooker writes, "Of things once received and confirmed by use, *long* usage is a law sufficient." It may not be that these are all the distinctions among these words established in the language, but I think they are true so far as they go.

HAPPIFY is a barbarism which I have never met with but in the dialect of the Methodist pulpit. Even "dictionaries unabridged" do not contain it.

HASTE and HURRY are not synonyms. The first does not imply confusion: the second does. A man may reasonably be in haste, never in a hurry. Napoleon, after a great defeat, when minutes of delay might bring the enemy upon his retreat, wrote a proposal for an armistice of a few hours; and when it was suggested, that, to save time, he should seal the document with a wafer, he said, "No: give me the sealing-wax and a candle. A man should never seem to be in a *hurry*."

HEALTHY and HEALTHFUL. — A valuable distinction has grown up in recent years, which is not yet insisted upon by the lexicographers; but scholarly usage should recognize it. "Healthy" expresses the condition: "healthful" means "producing health."

HEAVEN is improperly used as the synonym of "God." Milton speaks of "the permission of all-ruling Heaven." It must be conceded that old English usage authorizes this, but the style of the pulpit should reject it for its theological bearings. Any impersonal title of God should be generally avoided. One of the expedients by which the pulpit may preserve faith in the personality of God, in the popular theology, is by never using language which implies the opposite, or may do so.

A memorandum deserves note here on this word as the root of a multitude of English compounds to the use of which the pulpit is addicted, but without scholarly authority. I find in Webster's Dictionary no less than twenty-seven such compounds, of which only the six following have, in my judgment, the support of good

use or good taste; viz., "heaven-descended," "heaven-born," "heaven-daring," "heaven-directed," "heavenly-minded," and "heavenward."

HEAVENLY-MINDEDNESS is one of the cant words for which we are indebted to the Puritan pulpit. "A heavenly mind" expresses the idea perfectly. "Heavenly-minded" carries the compound to its extreme.

HOPE is improperly used for "hope for." Dr. Channing, who is not often guilty of unscholarly English, says, "We may hope the blessing of God."

HOW is often improperly employed interrogatively for some such query as, "What did you say, sir?" This is a colloquial vulgarism of New England. Thus used, the word has no meaning to which it can be grammatically applied. A man not accustomed to the dialect of cultivated society, if he has not understood the remark of a friend says, "How?" meaning that he desires a repetition of the remark. Polite usage, in such a case, prescribes the formula, "I beg your pardon," or "Excuse me, sir." These have a meaning pertinent to the case. "How?" signifies nothing. Such colloquial errors would not deserve a place here, were it not that the indulgence of them in conversational habit inevitably creates similar violations of good taste in written style. Dr. Oliver Wendell Holmes remarks, that the two signs of ignorance of cultured society are, that a man eats with his knife, and says, "Haow?"

I.

ILLY for ILL was in good use in Jeremy Taylor's time, but is now obsolete.

IMAGINATION and FANCY. — See Wordsworth's Preface to his "Lyrical Ballads." That essay is a fine specimen of literary criticism, and a striking example of the power of a great author to evolve from a language a latent distinction which the national mind, as represented by its educated classes, has felt vaguely between words, which, because of their vagueness, have been for generations used loosely. Probably Wordsworth has fixed those two words, with their present meanings, in the language for ever. What is the distinction? Both words express exercises of the mind's creative power; but "imagination" is the more profound, the more earnest, and the more logical. "Fancy" is the more

superficial, the more playful, and often the more capricious. The national mind has for a long time felt this difference, and has expressed it in the words "imaginative" and "fanciful." It did not clearly recognize the same difference between "fancy" and "imagination" till Wordsworth disclosed it.

IMPERATIVE and IMPERIOUS are very far from being synonyms. One means "authoritative;" the other, "domineering." God's law is imperative, never imperious. Imperiousness is always offensive. "This imperious man will work us all from princes into pages." — SHAKSPEARE. "His bold, contemptuous, and imperious spirit." — MACAULAY.

IMPLICIT in the sense of "undoubting," as in the phrase "implicit trust," is recognized by the dictionaries, but not by the most scholarly authors. Its proper meaning is the opposite of "explicit." "Did he assent to the contract? Not explicitly, but implicitly;" that is, by implication. Etymology still rules the signification of both these words. "Involved" and "evolved" express the contrast of ideas.

Yet it must be conceded that the word, in the sense here condemned, is making its way into good use. Only the more scrupulous authors now reject it. De Quincey makes a concession to it, when he says, that, in all his reading, he had found only two authors, Coleridge and Wordsworth, who uniformly employ it in its old etymological meaning. If only two writers within a large range of literature are faithful to its ancient use, it must be far on towards establishment in the language.

IMPROVEMENT as applied to the conclusion of a sermon is now obsolete, and was always a technicality of the pulpit only.

INAUGURATE in the sense of "introduce" is an impropriety. The proper sense is "to invest with office." It always refers to some official solemnity. The derivation of it from the old Roman *augur* indicates this; the augurs being the officers who invested the emperors with office by religious ceremonies. Yet so scholarly an authority as "The North American Review" says that a certain ship "was only a copy of a model inaugurated by Mr. Collins." Grant White, commenting upon this, suggests that the writer should have added, that "the President of the United States was invented on the 4th of March."

INCIDENT is improperly confounded with "liable." Says a living writer "The work was incident to decay." He should have

turned it end for end. Decay may be incident to a work: the work is liable to decay.

In spite of is not synonymous with "notwithstanding." It is a surly phrase. Is there no difference in rhetorical effect between saying, "in spite of your argument," and saying, "notwithstanding your argument"? Does not Shakspeare imply a threat, when he says, "I'll keep mine own in spite of all the world"?

Intend. — A very common impropriety of the pulpit is the use of this word as the synonym of "mean." A preacher says, "By this I intend," etc., when all that he wishes to express is his *meaning*. To intend is to purpose, to will. Mr. Trench commits this error in his "Study of Words."

Irreligionist is another of the barbarous coinages of recent years.

J.

Jeopardize is an Americanism, coined with the Greek form of termination. The English word is "jeopard."

L.

Lay and Lie. — The preterites of these two verbs are often confounded. Scholarly thoughtfulness is requisite to enable even an educated man always to avoid the error. Says a graduate of Harvard College, "He laid down." He should have said, either "He lay down," or "He laid himself down." I once heard from a theological professor in the pulpit the vulgarism "lien down."

Learn for Teach was once good English, signifying either to give or receive knowledge. The Book of Common Prayer so employs the word. At present it retains but one of these senses.

Lengthy for Long is very common in this country, and is used by some English reviews, and commended by some authorities. But "lengthy" certainly contains an idea which "long" does not contain. It includes the idea of tediousness, and therefore it is not wholly useless. It is employed by Coleridge and Lord Byron.

Lieve for Lief. — The latter is the English word. Shakspeare is classic in saying, "I had as lief the town-crier spoke my lines." The meaning is "willingly." Spenser, in the "Faerie Queene," employs "lief" as an adjective. That use is obsolete. The word is an old Saxon adverb.

Like for As is never heard in New England, but is not excluded

even from the pulpit of our Western and Southern States. "De like he does," says a preacher in Tennessee.

LIKE for LOVE. — We detect the difference between these words as soon as attention is called to it. Yet it is one of the frequent evidences of the want of colloquial culture, that they are employed interchangeably. A man should love the truth, not like it: he may like a leg of mutton, not love it.

LONG used as a noun is a very frequent error in the style of Alison the historian. "He was gone for long," says Alison, meaning, "for a long time."

M.

MAGNIFICENT is sometimes used as an unmeaning superlative. It is a noble word, and should be restricted to its real signification. It always involves either the etymological idea of "greatness," or the kindred ideas of "gorgeousness" and "costliness." Thus Milton writes, —

> "Man he made, and for him built
> Magnificent this world."

We degrade the word from its legitimate uses, if we speak of a magnificent complexion. As employed loosely in some pulpits, it is in peril of degenerating to the level of the French exclamation *Magnifique!*

MEAN for MEANS. — Till recently the Scottish writers favored the singular form; the English, the plural. Since the time of Addison, English and American use has adopted the plural. It is now used with either the plural or the singular pronoun.

MEMORIES for REMINISCENCES. — "Sunny Memories of Foreign Lands" is the title of a book by Mrs. Stowe. The attractiveness of the title is gained at the expense of pure English. Of the several significations of the word "memories," "things remembered" is not one. We detect the error by putting the word into the singular. We do not speak of a single reminiscence as a memory. Why not, if the plurals of the two words are synonyms?

METHINKS for I THINK was an old Anglo-Saxon form, but it has become obsolete except in poetry. Yet I find two remarkable authorities for it. One is Edward Everett, in his celebrated vision of "The Mayflower:" "Methinks I see it now!" The other is Hawthorne. Both are good authorities. But Mr. Everett wrote it

thirty, and Hawthorne at least fifteen, years ago. It is improbable that either would use it if living now.

MIGHTY for VERY should not find a place here if I had not heard it in sermons by graduates of colleges. "Mighty small," "mighty weak," etc., are among those improprieties which creep into one's written style if indulged in colloquially. It was in reputable use in England two hundred years ago.

MILITATE WITH should be "militate against." We say, "Conflicts with," obeying the etymology of the verb; but the other phrase has no such defense.

MISSIONATE, in the sense of "to act as a missionary." — It occurs in "The Missionary Herald," and is occasionally heard in sermons. We have no such word in the language.

MOMENT and MINUTE are not synonyms. The "minute" is the sixtieth part of an hour: the "moment" is the shortest possible measure of time. Says St. Paul, "In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye." The eye does not require a minute for the act of twinkling.

MOOT, improperly employed in the phrase "moot-point." — The word is a technicality of schools of law, in which imaginary courts are held for the disciplinary exercises of students. It has no classic authority.

MUTUAL and COMMON are confounded in the phrase "mutual friend:" it should be a "common friend." In the plural, "mutual friends" would not be inaccurate, meaning that two persons are friends each to the other. "Common friend" means that a third person is a friend to two or more other persons. "Mutual" implies interchange.

N.

NATURE is a critical word to the pulpit. It is often so employed as to confound certain theological senses of it. Of the variety of meanings attached to the word by scholarly usage, no two are more firmly fixed in the language than these, — "an involuntary constitution" and "a voluntary disposition" of the human mind. These are not creations of theology. Popular speech recognizes them, and has done so from time immemorial. The distinction is so radical in the necessary working of religious ideas, if they are pushed to expression in any language, that every language must contain it in some form. Our language unfortunately expresses it

by radically different senses of the same word. The Scriptures use the word as variously as popular speech does, loosely in appearance, not in fact. Confusion of thought is created in the pulpit if the two senses of the word are blended by transferring responsibility for a depraved disposition over upon a degenerate constitution, because both are properly termed "nature." Are we "by nature the children of wrath"? No: not by involuntary constitution. Are we "by nature the children of wrath"? Yes: by voluntary disposition. We abuse language, and confuse the truth, if we make a word the bridge by which we transpose ideas so radically distinct. Many sermons on the natural character of man are constructed at one end of the bridge, and closed with an application at the other, with a downright contradiction between.

News. — Is it singular, or plural? Illiterate usage asks, "What are the news?" Milton says, "Ill news rides fast."

Nice in the sense of "agreeable" is an Americanism. We speak improperly of a "nice day," a "nice fortune." A common vulgarism in metropolitan society is to designate certain persons as "nice people," meaning that they are agreeable people. The correct meaning of the word is "fastidious." A nice critic is a critic of fastidious taste.

No. — The phrase "whether or no" in pure English should be "whether or not."

Notify. — Should we "notify" a meeting, or "notify" an audience of a meeting? The English and American usages differ. The English pulpit adopts the first; and the American, the second. The English follow the original Latin etymology, deriving the word from *notifico*. The Americans follow the secondary derivation of the word, from the French *notifier*. The English form is the better of the two; that is, it is in closer affinity with the structure of the language. To "notify," by the analogy of other words of similar termination, should signify, "to make a thing known." Therefore we should notify the meeting, not the audience.

O.

Obligate for Oblige. — Richardson's Dictionary says that this word "is the more common among the common people." Smart's Dictionary says that it "is never heard among those who conform to the usage of the upper classes." The "British Critic" says, "It

is a low, colloquial inaccuracy." Dr. Worcester says, "It is much used in the United States." Webster admits it without objection. The history of the word is indicated in this succession of authorities. Doubtless it was formerly a barbarism, but has been growing towards, if not into, good use. I should, for the present, mark it as of doubtful authority, but recognizing that the chances are in its favor. Some critics contend that the derivation of it from the unexceptionable word "obligation" should settle the question. But a speaker in the American Congress once declared, "Mr. Speaker, I hurl the *allegation* back with scorn upon the head of the *allegator*." Did the correctness of one word here follow as a necessity from the accuracy of the other? English usage has no law for coining as a thing of course one word from another closely resembling it. Every word stands on its own merits; yet not always on its merits, but on the sheer will, even the caprice, of the national mind.

Obnoxious and Noxious. — Are they interchangeable? By no means. "Noxious" means "hurtful;" "obnoxious," only "unpopular." This word "obnoxious" has a singular theological history. It once involved the idea of just liability to punishment for sin, *ob noxam pœna*. Dr. South says, "What shall we say of the power of God to dispose of men, — little, finite, obnoxious things of his own making?" That is, "things justly deserving punishment." In present usage that idea is wholly lost from the word. It means "offensive," nothing more.

Observation and Observance. — Are they synonyms? No. The one means the act of "taking notice of:" the other means the act of "performing some duty." We should not say, "The observation of the sabbath," but "The observance," etc. Astronomers have recently taken observations of the transit of Venus. Faithful Christians practice the observance of the Lord's Day.

Onto is a vulgarism. The two prepositions "on" and "to" may occur consecutively, but the combination is often used where the second preposition is useless. "He fell onto the rocks." "Upon" would be the better form.

Open up is a phrase recognized as idiomatic English by lexicographers, but meaningless in its structure, and not used by the best authors. Why "up," rather than "down" or "out"? A good general rule in composition is to check one's pen in the writing of any phrase which seems to be redundant, or without obvious sense.

OUGHT. — It should not be, but it is, necessary to caution even graduates of American colleges against the use of vulgar inflections of this word; such as, "hadn't ought," etc.

P.

PATERNAL and FATHERLY. — Which? Both are good words; one Latin, the other Saxon. The Latin is the more stately, the Saxon the more cordial, in its associations. The Latin might be the more becoming in a diplomatic paper; the Saxon, vastly the more effective in a sermon.

PITIFUL, PITEOUS and COMPASSIONATE. — Are these words synonyms? By the authority of dictionaries, and to some extent by usage, we may answer both Yes and No. That is to say, contradictory meanings are attached to them. Thus, "pitiful" is used to express "feeling pity, exciting pity," and "exciting contempt." The same is true of "piteous." There are cases in which it is expedient that a preacher should be a law unto himself as to the senses in which *he* will employ language in the pulpit. As far as the structure of the language will permit, it is not desirable to employ the same word in senses diametrically opposite, even if usage does allow it. For example, it seems inexpedient in a sermon to express the compassionateness of God by the same word by which, in the next sermon, we express the contemptibleness of man. Yet this we may find ourselves doing if we follow all possible usage in the use of the word "pitiful." Usage will uphold us in saying that God is a pitiful, that is, a compassionate being; and that a certain man is a pitiful, that is, a contemptible being. Usage sometimes gives a liberty which good taste condemns as license. As a general rule, we may meet all the necessities of the pulpit by employing the word "compassionate" to express the idea of "exercising pity," "piteous" to express the idea of "exciting pity," and "pitiful" to express the idea of "exciting contempt." Thus, the good Samaritan was a compassionate man; the man who fell among thieves was in a piteous condition; the thieves were pitiful fellows.

PLEAD, used as a preterite form for "pleaded," is a corruption of long standing in the language; is found in Spenser's "Faerie Queene," but is almost universally avoided by scholars.

PLENTY, used as an adjective for "plentiful." — Dr. Webster, I think, is almost alone among lexicographers in admitting this

Shakspeare, however, employs it: "If reasons were plenty as blackberries, I would give no man a reason on compulsion." But good use is generally adverse to it at present.

POWER. — Note the confusion of its literal and its figurative uses in certain theological connections. The pulpit gains nothing for any theological interest by attempting to change or to ignore either of the two uses of this word and its synonyms, in preaching on human dependence and divine sovereignty. The "can" and the "can not," the "power" and the "want of power," the "ability" and the "inability," of man in his relations to God, are perfectly well rooted in the language. Popular usage does not surrender either of them, if schoolmen do. Usage has fixed one sense as literal, and the other as figurative. So far as the popular mind is concerned, that is the end of the whole matter. In the attempts sometimes made to distinguish between "power" and "ability," to suit theological theories, the popular mind does not follow the pulpit at all. Usage acknowledges flatly the contradiction in appearance, when we say that man can and that he can not repent, yet feels none in fact, any more than in any other cases of contradiction between the letter and the figure.

PREDICATE in the sense of "found" is an Americanism, confined chiefly to the usage of the bar, as when an advocate says, "I predicate my client's claims upon admitted facts;" meaning, "I found," etc. This is entirely opposed to the classic English use. "Predicate" means "to assert," nothing else.

PREPOSITIONS — I note this word, only for the sake of commending a very valuable catalogue of verbs with the prepositions which good use attaches to them, in the Preface to Worcester's Unabridged Dictionary. With not more than one or two exceptions, it is very accurate.

PRIDE and VANITY. — The pulpit is misled by the popular error in interchanging these words. The sin of pride is denounced when the connection indicates that the thing denounced is not that, but vanity; not the self-contained vice which despises other men, but the superficial vice which depends for its indulgence on the opinion of other men. The Scriptures are keen in their analysis of human nature, when they condemn pride as the most concentrated of mental vices and the most corrosive to upright character. Satan is pride personified. We do not know that he was ever weak enough to be vain.

PROFANITY and PROFANENESS. — Which? Usage is not uniform. The latter form is in closer analogy than the former with the structure of the English language. Professor Park says, that, if one says "profanity," one *may be* supported by good usage, but that, if one says "profaneness," one is *sure* to be thus supported; that is, the first of these forms is of doubtful authority.

PROFESSOR, used as the synonym of "communicant" in the church, is an impropriety limited to the dialect of the pulpit and to that of those who take their habits of speech from it. It is never used by secular authors of any rank. A sermon was once read for criticism in my lecture-room, the preacher standing at the right hand of the presiding officer, the subject of which was, "The Inconsistencies of Professors." The term was one of the improper titles used in homiletic applications by the Rev. Dr. Payson.

PROGRESS, employed as a verb intransitive, should be marked as doubtful. Dr. Worcester says that the majority of authors of the first class avoid it. Critics commonly condemn it as an Americanism, but it is not such. It is found in the elder English authors, and probably was in good repute two centuries ago. Shakspeare, in King Lear, says, "Let me wipe off this honorable dew, that silverly doth progress on thy cheeks." The pronunciation of the word in Shakspeare's time probably accented the first syllable. If so, the word was one of those forms in which the verb and the noun are distinguished by difference of accent; as in the words "*con*duct" and "con*duct*."

PUNISHMENT for CHASTISEMENT is frequent in the pulpit, and very harmful in its implications. The popular mind is quite ready always to confound affliction with retribution. The natural theology of Job's friends is deeply rooted in human nature. We can not be too careful to sharpen the popular thought of sin by accurate use of words expressive of its penalties. "Punishment" should not be applied to any suffering which is corrective. Such a use of it tends to confuse the popular idea of the atonement. If disciplinary suffering is punishment, the suffering of Christ may be such. It can not be proved that any individual suffering in this world is retributive. I do not say that it is never so, but that it can not in any individual case be proved. We need, for the construction of a self-consistent theology, to draw a sharp line of distinction between retributive and corrective suffering. A truthful faith respecting the retribution of eternity depends on this.

Q.

QUITE in the sense of "very" is not good English; as in the expression "quite recently," or "the discourse was quite long." The true meaning of "quite" is "entirely."

R.

RAISE is improperly employed in two American provincialisms, one used in the Southern States, and the other in the Northern. Southern usage says, "He was raised in Alabama;" "raise" being used in the sense of "to bring up." Northern usage says, "They raised a committee;" "raise" being used in the sense of "to appoint." Classic English admits neither.

RATHER, in the phrase "I had rather," should be preceded by "would" instead of "had." "Rather" expresses a preference. "Had rather" is probably a corruption of the phrase "had better," which is a pure English idiom. The translators of the Old Testament into English committed the error in making the Psalmist say, "I had rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God."

RATIONAL and REASONABLE are not interchangeable. "Rational" refers to the existence of reason; "reasonable," to its exercise. To say that an opinion is irrational is to say that it implies the loss or suspension of reason: to pronounce an opinion unreasonable is only to say that the arguments in support of it are not sufficient. I may hold unreasonable opinions which are not irrational: my deficiency may be in a perverted use of reason, not in the loss of it.

REALIZE in the sense of "appreciate" or "feel." — Secular critics condemn the religious use of this word; as, in the phrase "realize the magnitude of eternity." They are supported by the most reputable usage among secular authors. I would not, therefore, employ the word in this sense in any secular composition. But, in the representation of religious experience, this meaning of the word is a necessity. We have no other which is adequate. I would not, therefore, exclude it from the pulpit. Let it be tolerated, as other religious or scientific technicalities are. The technical dialect of the clerical profession, so far as it is necessary to the business of the profession, has the same right to existence in the language which the dialect of other professions has, and no more.

REASON and UNDERSTANDING. — Shall we admit the distinction between these words for which Coleridge contends? Philosophically the distinction may be true: that is one thing. If true, we must admit it, at least, as having a place among the technicalities of philosophy. Whether usage has adopted the distinction into national English is another question, and must be answered in the negative. A preacher would seem to his audience to talk nonsense, who should preach a sermon founded, as even a practical sermon might be, upon that distinction. The popular mind knows nothing of it.

RELUCT and RELUCTATE are both barbarisms, though some dictionaries admit them on the authority of authors of inferior rank.

REMORSE should not be employed to express only the sense of sin. This suggestion is of great significance to the pulpit. Remember always, in the use of this word, its etymological meaning, "*remordeo*," "to bite back." This idea the word has never lost. Remorse is retaliatory, not salutary. It tends to no good. Shakspeare says, "Nero will be tainted with remorse." Never exhort a sinner to cherish remorse. Penitence and hope should accompany a sense of sin; then remorse ceases. The sense of sin then becomes remedial, as distinct from retributive. Yet the ancient usage of the pulpit was so loose on this point, that, to this day, the conviction of sin and remorse are often confounded in the popular mind. I doubt whether John Randolph, when on his death-bed he could not speak, but wrote on a card the word "remorse," meant any thing more than that he felt himself to be a great sinner.

REMOVE, in the phrase "an infinite remove," is erroneous. Usage limits the use of the word in such connections to a small distance. Addison says, "A freeholder is but one remove from a legislator."

RETROSPECT used as a verb. — It is admitted by some lexicographers, but rarely acknowledged by good writers.

RIDE and DRIVE. — English usage makes a distinction between these words which is not commonly recognized in this country, but is a valuable one, and it augments the precision of the language. A "ride" is in the saddle: a "drive" is in a carriage.

RUGGED and HARDY are not synonyms. "Rugged" is "rough." We should not speak of "rugged health."

S.

SANG, SPAKE, SPRANG, have, for the most part, yielded to the more modern forms, "sung," "spoke," "sprung." These double forms originally expressed different numbers of the tense. "Sang" was the singular; and "sung," the plural. The disappearance of this distinction leaves no occasion for the retention of both forms, and the old singular forms are obsolescent.

SAVE for EXCEPT is obsolete, except in poetry and in biblical quotation.

SCRIPTURALITY is not used by authors of the first class. Yet we have no one word to take its place.

SECURITY and SAFETY are often interchanged, yet are not synonyms; and the distinction between them is one which it is desirable to retain. "Security" retains somewhat of its etymological meaning of "freedom from care." Preachers speak classically of a sinner's "false security," not of his "false safety."

SELF-LOVE and SELFISHNESS have a very marked distinction, often overlooked, which is fundamental in theology. Ever since Bishop Butler's day, the distinction has been established. He says, "Men would be much better than they are if they had more self-love." Self-love is a legitimate and unavoidable exercise of intelligent beings: selfishness is not such. The one is innocent; the other, a sin. The popular query of the last generation in New England "Must a man be willing to be damned in order to be saved?" would never have been asked if the pulpit had never confounded these words.

SELFSAME is obsolescent, and was never in classic use. "Same" expresses the whole idea.

SENSUAL and SENSUOUS are liable to confusion in the usage of the pulpit. The former always involves moral wrong: the latter is only a philosophical term. All men are sensuous beings: only bad men are sensual beings. Our Saviour in human form was sensuous, but not sensual.

SHALL and WILL are improperly interchanged. In Ireland, "will" is frequently employed for "shall;" and in Scotland the reverse is common. In the Southern and some of the Western States of this country, the Irish error is frequent. "I will need the means of going," says a native of Virginia. The structure of our language tempts one to this error. In declension we are taught to say, "I

will, you shall, he shall;" but we reverse the forms, and say, "I shall, you will, he will." It is out of this irregularity of declension, probably, that the error has arisen.

SHEW for SHEWED, and pronounced as if it were "shue," is a singular corruption, often heard in the city of Boston among some who call themselves people of culture. "He shew me how to do it." I have never encountered this vulgarism elsewhere.

SHORTCOMINGS is authorized by the dictionaries, but is one of the cant phrases of an uneducated pulpit. It is almost hopelessly rooted in a barbarous dialect of prayer. When you are tempted to use it, remember that "Cummings" is a not uncommon family name in New England, and that those who bear it *differ in stature*. De Quincey condemns the word as a Scotticism. He says that it is "horridly tabernacular," that "no gentleman would touch it without gloves;" and, with his usual respect for the clergy, he advises that "it be resigned henceforth to the use of preachers."

SIDEHILL should give place to the more classic form "hillside."

SOME is improperly used for "somewhat." "Is the patient better?" — "Some better." "Does it rain?" — "Yes, some."

SOLEMNIZE, in the sense of "to make solemn." — "Solemnize our minds" is often heard in extemporaneous prayer. This and the word "shortcomings" are potent arguments for a Liturgy. "Solemnize," however, is not a barbarism: it is a good and ancient English word. It means "to celebrate a religious ceremony." We properly speak of "solemnizing" a marriage. In Shakspeare's time, even the word "solemn" was employed in similar connections, but without any necessary idea of seriousness. It was employed in reference to any important ceremony. Macbeth, on the occasion of his coronation, says, "To-night we hold a solemn supper;" that is, "a festival of inauguration." From such a history the word "solemnize" has grown.

SOUL. — I note this word for the sake of a criticism upon its very numerous compounds. I find in Webster's Dictionary no less than thirty-five such compounds, of which not more than three can be said to be in classic use. All the rest are a burden of barbarism upon the forces of the language.

SPIRITUAL-MINDEDNESS is another of the long-waisted cant words of the pulpit. "A spiritual mind" expresses the whole idea, and is a form which would not repel a scholarly taste.

STATION *vs.* DEPOT. — Which? By authority of usage, both;

but by that of good taste, "station" is the purer English. It is English in its structure, and is generally used in England. "Depot" is of French origin; and, in the American use of it, it is diverted from its French signification, which is "a depository for freight." If we follow the French, why not do so in pronunciation of the word? Our language would be improved by the adoption of both words, retaining severally the English and the French significations. Let passengers be deposited at a "station," and freight at a "depót." For the present, however, we must defer to usage, but with a protest.

STRICKEN for STRUCK is an impropriety, except in the usage of legislative bodies. A clause is spoken of as "stricken" from a legislative bill. In other connections the word is the synonym of "afflicted."

SUNDOWN should give way to the more classic form "sunset." Even the common people of England prefer the latter form.

SYMPATHY and PITY are not exact synonyms. "Sympathy" has never lost entirely its etymological sense of feeling *with* another. It is a finer exercise of benevolence than "pity." We may pity one whom we despise: we can not sympathize with such a one.

SYSTEMIZE. — One of the few cases in which usage has triumphed over the Saxon love of brevity in the growth of our language is, that we must say, not "systemize," but "systematize."

T.

TALENT *vs.* TALENTS. — Which? Both, but not as synonyms. "Talent" should not be employed collectively. We may not say, "a man of talent," but "of talents."

TEMPER for ANGER. — The proper English sense of the word "temper" is just the opposite of anger. It contains the same idea which is in its derivative "temperate." It means moderation or self-possession. Pope writes, "Teach me . . . to fall with dignity, with *temper* rise."

THANKS! for the phrase *I thank you*, is an exclamation in colloquial use, of very recent origin. It is criticised by a respectable class of conservators of good English. Yet it is a curious fact that the innovation is practiced chiefly by those who profess to be men and women of culture. Rarely do we hear it from the lips of the common people. It is an affectation originated by some-

body who mistook eccentricity for smartness. In my judgment it is sure to be ephemeral. It is one of those affectations of urban society which the sturdy good sense of the people will reject. Already protests against it begin to be heard. I have been recently informed that one of the most eminent groups of literary men in this country have agreed to avoid it in the interest of Saxon purity of colloquial English. Tennyson, if report speaks truly, has recently reproved it in one of his own guests by responding to it, "Thanks, yes, or Thanks, no? — which is it?"

It is a safe general rule, never to adopt the colloquial novelties which the society of cities originates, on such authority alone. Metropolitan taste, as such, nowhere represents either the most accomplished scholarship or the soundest good sense in the use of language. If the backwoods and the lowgrounds of society corrupt the language in their speech, the ruling classes of great cities do the same, with less excuse for their error. The impure English originated by them would make a small dictionary by itself. The multitude of the great middle classes in the social scale, as a rule, speak purer English than either extreme.

THE. — I note this article for the sake of observing the error of omitting it from a variety of words for which precision requires it. We have observed its omission from the word "community." Other words are subjected to the same decapitation. "Opposition," "ministry," "presbytery," "council," "congress," are examples. We say, "*The* Senate, *the* House of Representatives:" why not "*the* Congress" as well? This *was* the usage of the most scholarly men among the statesmen of the first age of the republic. It is said to have been revived by President Arthur. The most unscholarly omission of the article, in which the error is open to the charge of irreverence, is in the use, without the article, of the titles of the divine Trinity in the formula of baptism and the closing ascription in prayer: "In the name of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost!" Is not the use of the article before each title more reverent? By the more deliberate utterance which it compels, the sentiment of reverence gains time to express itself. My attention was first called to this by a hearer who said that a certain preacher's rapid utterance of the trinitarian formula without the article reminded him of the title of a mercantile firm, like "Smith, Jones, & Robinson."

THEN should not be used adjectively. Edmund Burke, who does

not often fall into errors of style, speaks of himself as being "unknown to the then ministry." Had he said "the then existing ministry," he would have used good English.

THIS or THAT for THUS. — "This much," "that much," are modern corruptions. I have no notion of their origin, unless they are perversions of the phrase "thus much." They have no hold upon good authority.

TRANSPIRE. — What is its meaning? To "happen," or to "become known"? The latter surely: it has no other signification in good English use, the dictionaries to the contrary notwithstanding. This is one of the cases in which the liberty allowed by lexicographers degenerates into license. The idea of this word is very accurately given by the phrase "to leak out." "Transpire" and "perspire" are etymologically nearly identical. They both imply the passing-out of something imperceptibly. Usage, therefore, has taken the word "transpire" to express the coming of a secret thing to publicity. If you associate these two words in your minds, the one may assist you to remember the true meaning of the other. A New-York journal spoke of the Mexican War as "transpiring in 1847." Grant White, commenting on the style, observes, that, considering the latitude in which the war occurred, the writer might as properly have said that "the war perspired in 1847."

U.

UGLY, in the sense of "ill-natured," is, for the most part, found only in this country. The English sense of the word is "disagreeable in personal appearance." In pure English we speak of an ugly countenance, not of an ugly disposition.

UNBEKNOWN is a vulgarism. We have no such word in the language.

UN. — Let this prefix be noted for the sake of observing that one of our standard dictionaries admits nearly three hundred words of compound structure of which this is the initial syllable; yet scarcely more than one-half of these are probably extant in the writings of eminent English authors, unless they are employed, as so many compounds were in the Greek literature, for comic purposes.

UNWISDOM and UNREASON are examples of compounds, not good English, to the use of which the pulpit is specially prone

The style of some preachers seems to be constructed on the theory that any word which is pure English may give birth to its opposite by prefixing the negative prefix "un."

V.

VARIATE is corrupt English for "vary." In New England may be sometimes heard in prayer the petition, "Do thou variate thy mercies," etc.

W.

WAS for WERE. — Many cultivated men and women have not learned the simple law of grammar which forbids the phrase "You was," and the interrogative, "Was you?" I have heard a college-graduate say that he was a senior in college before he was taught the correct process.

WERE for WAS is a still more inexcusable corruption, because it is commonly an affectation. People whose aspirations after the name of culture exceed their acquisitions, often have a hazy idea that something is wrong in certain uses of the word "was," and that "were" is at any rate more literary. Therefore one says "When I were in New York;" and another responds, "I were in Europe then." Probably the error has grown out of a confusion of the indicative with the subjunctive mood. Because it is often wrong to say, "If I was," some adopt "I were" for the indicative, when they strain to be very accurate. When they think nothing about their style, they probably talk good English, and say, "I was."

By the directions of the older grammarians we were required to say, "If I were, if he were," etc., wherever the subjunctive was used; that is, the "past tense" of the subjunctive was not recognized. Usage broke over that rule long before the grammarians saw the necessity for doing so. The first authority for it which attracted my attention was Lord Macaulay. No grammar which had then come to my notice contained it.

WHOLE for ALL is a very frequent corruption in the writings of Alison the historian. He speaks of "the whole citizens of the State." How many fragments of citizens were there? Alison's History is a splendid thesaurus of illustrations of bad English.

WORLDLY-MINDEDNESS is another of the long-eared barbarisms of the pulpit. Is not "a worldly mind" expressive of the whole

idea? Yet Walter Scott would not have been offended by it, as he says he was by the style of the Methodist pulpit.

WOULD SEEM and SHOULD SEEM. — For what reason I do not know, usage prescribes the second of these phrases, and not the first. Yet it admits the phrase "would appear." Whether a distinction apparently so causeless can hold its place in the language remains to be seen.

In closing this catalogue, let me add a note in answer to the inquiry, "What are the best English grammars for a preacher's table?" Brown's "Grammar of English Grammars" is a compendium of a variety of grammatical authorities, and is valuable for a comparison of them. But, for ordinary use upon one's study-table, the best grammars are the most elementary. For years after my own ministry began, I found none superior to Lindley Murray, who taught our fathers to speak and write their mother-tongue. Of late years smaller and better works have appeared, among which those of Wells and Greene and Swinton hold high rank.

You will find that the practical queries which you need a grammar to answer are, the major part of them, elementary queries. Nobody learns to talk good English from the study of grammars alone. We learn it from prolonged association with people of culture. Many have not had that in early life: therefore errors have crept into their colloquial style, and from that into their written style, which now they must appeal to their grammars to correct; and the majority of them are elementary. They are such as any standard grammar will correct. Therefore I advise every young preacher, first to keep for consultation the English grammar which he studied in his youth. His familiarity with that makes it more valuable to *him* than a better one to which he is a stranger. No other Greek or Latin grammar is so valuable to you as those in which you first learned the Greek or Latin language. The same is true of our vernacular grammars. Then add to the grammar of your youth one or more of the

later school text-books; and, of these, any one of a half-dozen is as good as another for the purpose you have in view.

For the more elaborate study of grammar as a science, and historically, Latham's and Mætzner's works are the best. Latham's is the original of Fowler's, and of several others of more recent date. Mætzner's is a German work, not, so far as I know, translated. But, for practical reference in your professional labors, neither is as good as a good high-school text-book.

I venture to recommend, especially to those of you who are to labor in foreign missions, the continuance of this class of philological and rhetorical studies in which we have been engaged. No other study, in my judgment, so easily keeps alive, and keeps in healthy growth, the spirit of scholarly culture. One of the chief perils which foreign missionaries encounter, as they inform me, is that of a decline in their mental culture. They are surrounded often by a mass of stagnant mind. Generally they live among minds inferior to their own in culture. Their professional work is largely elementary. In that, therefore, they do not find intellectual pressure. Even their teaching is chiefly of that character. A theological professor in a missionary seminary can not teach theology as it is taught in American schools. He would not be understood if he did. He must simplify and popularize; and many topics he can not discuss at all. They are above the mental level of his hearers.

Unless, therefore, a missionary is surrounded by a cultivated English society, as in Constantinople and in Calcutta, which interests itself sufficiently in missions to welcome him socially and to literary clubs, he is in peril of subsiding to the mental level of the necessity which his work lays upon him. The natural law of all culture is to meet necessities, and no more. We do in intellectual training and acquisition what we *must* do. We rise to our work if that is intellectually above us: we fall to its plane if it is below us.

Such is nature's law. We are superior to it only by early foresight and force of will.

One of the most eminent and highly educated American missionaries once told me, that the single privation and peril which overtopped all others in his missionary life was not expatriation, nor physical nor social hardship, nor the want of spiritual success, but the constant pressure of intellectual stagnation, crowding down the aspirations of his youth. Incessant contact with dead and dying intellect was almost fatal to his own intellectual life. He felt nothing else so sadly on his return to this country, after an absence of thirty years, as the difference in that respect between his own experience and that of his collegiate and theological classmates. Yet he had spent his life in one of the most stimulating missions of the East.

To offset that tendency to mental stagnation, every missionary, in my judgment, needs some one purely intellectual pursuit which shall be above the level, and shall lift him at times above the level, of his missionary labor. Some may find it in the study of philosophy; others, in that of the ancient classics; others, in general English literature. Every missionary needs some such intellectual life-preserver to prevent his sinking to the plane of the national mind around him. One of the most fascinating and easily prosecuted studies of that kind is that of English literature, pursued with a scholarly eye to the structure and the growth of the English language.

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